

A STUDY
OF
IMPORTANT GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS & LITERARY

by

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PREFACE

Inscriptions are, by far, the best records as to the sources of cultural, social and religious history of Ancient India, and to a student of the history of Ancient India, these records are indispensable. The Golden Age of the Guptas (319 A.D.—500 A. D.), which has sometimes been described as the Periclean Age of India, has produced a lot of excellent inscriptional writings that furnish us with variegated information relating to this era. The wonderful efflorescence of culture that India, specially northern part, witnessed during this period, in sharp contrast to the unsettled and disordered state in the preceding years, is to be corroborated mainly by the epigraphical records. The Gupta inscriptions are mostly written in Sanskrit, while the Maurya epigraphical writings chose Prākṛt medium. Some of the Gupta inscriptions are notable instances of *Kāvya* and can stand comparison even with the best creations of the gifted authors of classical Sanskrit.

The inscriptions that were prepared in the Gupta era enlighten us, on the one side, about the efficient administration carried on by the Gupta monarchs and, on the other, the development of Sanskrit artificial poetry. The inscriptions, selected for this study, are principally concerned with the glorious reign of the Imperial Guptas (and not of the later Guptas), namely, Samudragupta (335 A.D.—375 A.D.), Candragupta II (375 A.D.—413 A.D.), Kumāragupta I (413 A.D.—454 A.D.), Skandagupta (455 A.D.—467 A.D.) and Budhagupta (476 A.D.—495 A.D.). These emperors could claim unique distinction in the matter of establishing peace and prosperity in the northern region of India where, prior to the emergence of the Gupta power, political rancour and disintegration continued for several years beginning from the dissolution of the Kuṣāṇa empire. Indian civilisation, under these monarchs was in an exalted state, as is faithfully corroborated by the inscriptional records and supported by other documents as well, such as, architectural, sculptural, numismatic, etc.

Reputed scholars like J. F. Fleet, G. Bühler, D. R. Bhandarkar and D. C. Sircar have made valuable contributions to the study of epigraphical writings. Our humble attempt, however, is mainly to assess the value of some important and impressive Gupta inscriptions and to collect therefrom information regarding historical, social, religious and literary superbness of the Golden Age. Some inscriptions, although devoid of much literary importance, have been included in this study because they throw enough light on the administrative and religious aspects of the period under review.

In preparing this work, I have freely consulted 'Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III', edited by J. F. Fleet, 'Select Inscriptions' by Dr. D. C. Sircar, 'The Gupta Empire' by Dr. R. K. Mukherjee and 'A study of Vaiṣṇavism' by my esteemed teacher Prof. Kunja Govinda Goswami. I like to acknowledge my deep gratitude and indebtedness to these scholars, for, their speculation have kindled the interest in me to take up this comparatively neglected topic.

I hereby take opportunity to convey my sincere thanks to Dr. Dalim Kumar Banerjee, Lecturer in Political Science, Gobardanga Hindu College, who rendered invaluable service by exerting himself to go through the manuscript. He has also suggested additions and alterations wherever necessary. Thanks are due to Dr. Himansu Narayan Chakravarty, Lecturer in Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, who inspired me in many ways. I am very grateful to my wife Sm. Santi Banerjee, Lecturer in Sanskrit, Jogmaya Devi College, Calcutta, who constatly encouraged me in accomplishing my task. I thank Sri Shyamapada Bhattacharya of Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar and Sri Suresh Datta of Modern Printers, whose sincerity has made possible for this work to be published so soon.

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CHAPTER—I

The sources of Indian history are ascertained mainly by literary works, inscriptions, sculpture and architecture. The *inscriptions* throw considerable light on the political, social, *economic* and religious history of the rulers of Ancient India. Several *long-disputed problems* are sometimes settled by the excavation and decipherment *of the inscriptions.* Thus, depending on *inscriptional records we can definitely know the* date of Candragupta II's accession on the throne (*i.e.* 375 A. D) and the approximate date of poet Bhāravi. Due to the systematic arrangement of the epigraphical materials, the history of the Imperial Guptas (319 A. D—500 A. D) may be built on a sound basis. These inscriptions are incised on stones as well as on metals. They deal mainly with the chronicles of political events, records of religious endowments or secular donations. Of these, the donative inscriptions far outnumber the others.

The *inscriptions, so far available,* speak, *on the other hand,* of wide *cultivation* and *sporadic* development of Kāvya *literature* both *in* Prākṛt and *in* Sanskrit. The earliest inscriptions including those of the Maurya period are all retained in Prākṛt language. The earliest of the Sanskrit inscriptions, yet discovered, is the Ghosundi (near Nagarī, Citorgadh, Rājasthān) stone inscription of King Sarvatāta, dated the 2nd half of the 1st century B. C. The text runs thus[1]—*kārito ayaṁ rājñā bhāgavatena gājāyanena pārāśarī-putreṇa sarvatātena aśvamedha-yājinā bhagavadbhyāṁ saṁkarsaṇavāsudevābhyāṁ pūjāśilā-prākāro nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka.* This inscription is of much impor-

1. *ed. by* K. P. Jayaswal, *Epigraphia Indica,* Vol. XVI, pp. 26-27.

tance from the standpoint of religious history. K. P. Jayaswal maintains, "It is the earliest monumental proof of the fact that temples were erected to Vāsudeva and to his brother, and that the followers of the cult included even Brahmins." The origin of the temple-cult is not exactly known, but we may deduce from this inscription that at least in the 1st century B. C., idol-worship at temples was widely popular and it was one of the current media of attaining religion. This inscription also points to the royal patronage of Bhāgavata religion. King Sarvatāta performed the horse-sacrifice [*aśvamedha-yājinā*] and he was a follower of Vaiṣṇava religion. He made a stone-enclosure for the place of worship [*pūjā-śilā-prākāra*] at a locality called Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka and dedicated it to gods Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. Some scholars are of the opinion that a rectangular stone enclosure with walls nearly ten feet high at the site of Hāthī-bāḍā near Nagarī is the remnant of the ancient *pūjā-śilā-prākāra* mentioned in this inscription[2]. It is apparent that during the 1st century B. C., the worship of the brothers Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva as the popular deities was in practice, though later on Saṁkarṣaṇa's worship became obsolete. This inscription is also valuable from the perspective of language used. Dr. Lüders and others have described this language as a mixture of Prākṛt and Sanskrit : Jayaswal thinks that it is based on defective readings due to the mistake on the part of the engraver. But it is evident that the Ghoṣuṇḍi inscription is nothing but a Sanskrit record.

The next remarkable Sanskrit inscriptional work is the Junāgaḍh rock inscription of Rudradāman I, dated 150 A. D.[3] It is purely in prose being the product of the preliminary stage

2. Prof. K. G. Goswami—A study of Vaiṣṇavism, Calcutta, 1956, p. 8.
3. Keilhorn—Ep. Indica, Vol. VIII, pp. 42 f.

of the Sanskrit prose Kāvya. It also predicts the future prose style abounding in long compounds as noticed in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita* and in Bāṇabhaṭṭa's works. It further shows the beginning of Sanskrit court-poetry which succeeded in getting maturity several centuries later. It also marks the transition period from simple epic style to that of ornate Kāvya. In this inscription, though grammatical rules have been generally followed, some irregularities are also detectable. Prākṛt influence on this inscription is prominently visible. Compound forms used here are not, however, complicated and are ordinarilly in simple words. Of the *śabdālaṁkāra*-s, the alliteration is often with real effect [such as, *abhyastanāmno rudradāmno*—line 4 and *śaktena dāntenācapalenāvismitenāryeṇāhāryena*—line 19]. The author describes the king as well-versed in lexicography [*śabdārtha*], music [*gāndharva*], logic [*nyāya*], etc. (line 13); he ascribes to the king the authorship of poems both in prose and verse distinguished by "a string of epithets as adorned by the qualities of simplicity, clearness, sweetness, variety, beauty and elevation arising from the use of conventional poetic terminology" cf. *sphuṭa-laghu-madhura-citra - kānta - śabda - samayodārālaṁkṛta-gadya - padya - kāvya-vidhāna-pravīṇena* (line 14). The terms *alaṁkṛta* (line 14), *lakṣaṇa* and *vyañjana* (line 15) undoubtedly point to the author's acquaintance with the science of poeties—elaborate treatises on which appeared several centuries later. This inscription bears the characteristics of the Vaidarbhī style as has been explained by Daṇḍin in his Kāvyādarśa (Ch. I. 41-42). The style and diction, treated in the Junāgadh inscription, greatly influenced later writers of epigraphic works including those of Hariṣena and Vatsabhaṭṭi whose works are no less poetic than those of the celebrated masters of classical Sanskrit poetry.

CHAPTER—II

The Gupta period has produced a large number of inscriptions, composed wholly or partly in verses, with absolutely certain dates. These inscriptions are studiously written in Sanskrit and there exist at least fifteen inscriptions which are made up of excellent Kāvya elements ; their style resembles that of the compositions of the eminent masters of Indian poetic art. It is not possible to estimate, even briefly, the entire inscriptional literature of the Gupta age within a limited space. So our study will be concentrated mainly on those inscriptions, written during the reign of the Imperial Guptas, which are valuable not only from historical or religious point of view but also from literary stand-point. In fact, in these inscriptions, historical events, religion, socio-political culture and literature have found happy synthesis. Herein lies their distinctiveness in contradistinction to other pervious and contemporaneous inscriptions. Two or three inscriptions, though not so much important from literary perspective, are, however, included in our study, because they contain valuable information regarding administrative structure of Bengal under the Gupta rule.

The language of the Gupta inscriptions is partly characterised by Prākṛt influences, ungrammatical forms, wrong spellings, indifference to Sandhi rules, doubling of consonants (as in *vikkrama*, *pauttrah*, etc.) and such other peculiarities. These irregularities, however, need not be seriously taken note of, for, the inscriptions were intended principally for conveying messages to the general public and they contain words and idioms that were distinguished by the manner people used to

talk and also by the system of pronounciation current at that time. Because of these facts, the inscriptions did not follow mechanical line of spelling or other grammatical restrictions. Moreover, several epigraphs were evidently composed by poets attached to the courts of kings and, therefore, they sometimes appear to be excellent pieces of polished poetry. But there is no denying the fact that notwithstanding their eloquency and ornamentation, these inscriptions have not universally achieved the designation of true poetry; it must be admitted that since wordly matters and actual happenings were dealt with in these epigraphical writings, there remained little scope for poetic excellence. But irrespective of these shortcomings, the inscriptions as a whole constitute an important branch of literature which goes a long way in supplementing our knowledge about Indian culture.

The Allahabad stone pillar inscription[4], as composed by Hariṣeṇa in praise of Samudragupta, stands out as a distinguishing inscription of the Gupta era. It is a poetical composition and the author held such prestigeous offices as the *Khādyaṭapākika* ("Officer controlling the Superintendents of the the Royal Kitchen"), the *Sāndhivigrahika* ("Minister for Peace and War"), *Kumārāmātya* ("Counsellor of the prince"), and the *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* ("the chief of the Police and the criminal magistrate"). Dhruvabhūti, Hariṣena's father was also a *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*. This inscription is the primary source of Samudragupta's history —both personal and political. That Samudragupta was a poet and a man of letters, is revealed from the statement that he "gathered at his court the literary masters by whose judgements he was able to check those compositions which were against the

4. Fleet—Corpus Inscripitionum Indicarum. Vol. III, Varanasi, 1970 No. I, pp. 1 f.

spirit of true poetry ; he himself composed a large volume of poetry which appealed to all for its clear meaning and brought him fame." [*sat-kāvya-śrī-virodhān budhaguṇitaguṇājñāhatān eva kṛtvā vidval loke' vināśi-sphuṭa-bahu-kavitā-kīrttirājyaṁ bhunakti* /verse-3]. It was in recognition of poetic excellence that Samudragupta was endowed with the laudatory synonym—. 'Kavirāja' i.e. the king of the poets ; he is said to have composed a lot of poems [*aneka-kāvya-kriyābhiḥ pratiṣṭhita—kavirāja-śabdasya*]. Religion was his daily companion : in him, religion. found its niche [*dharmaprācīrabandhaḥ*]. Samudragupta's campaigns and conquests are faithfully detailed in this panegyric and thus it renders help to the historians in forming an authentic history of the eminent emperor. His military campaigns have been geographically classified under four heads :. (1) the ruthless war of extermination against the kings of Āryāvarta including Rudradeva, Matila, Nāgadatta, Candravarman, Gaṇapatināga, Nāgasena, Acyuta, Nandin and Balavarman ; (2) the great military expedition to the *Dakṣiṇāpatha* where Samudragupta is said to have captured and thereafter liberated [*grahaṇa-mokṣānugraha*] several kings including king Mahendra of Kośala, Vyāghrarāja of Mahākāntāra;, Maṇṭarāja of Kerala, and Mahendragiri of Piṣṭapura ; (3) complete subjection of the kings of the forest-states [*paricārakīkṛta-sarvāṭavikarājyasya*] ; and (4) the submission, to his imperious commands, of the frontier emperors [*pratyanta-nṛpati*] and of the tribal chiefs ; they gave him all kinds of taxes, obeyed his orders and approached him to offer deep obeisance [*sarva-kara-dānājñākaraṇa—praṇāmāgamana*]. These events establish that Samudragupta extended his power over a vast territory.

People of the overseas islands incluing the Kuṣāṇa chiefs and the Kuṣāṇa emperor [*daivaputraṣāhiṣāhānuṣāhi*], the Śaka chieftains [*śaka-muruṇḍaiḥ*] and the inhabitants of Ceylon

[*saiṁhalakādibhiśca*] rendered to Samudragupta various kinds of services ; their services consisted of (1) the offering of their own persons for the personal service to the emperor, (2) gifts of maidens, (3) presents and (4) application of charters endowed with the Imperial Garuda seal for the possession of one's own territory. cf. *sarvadvīpa-vāsibhir ātmanivedana-kanyopāyanadāna-garutmad aṅka-svaviṣaya-bhukti-śāsana-yācanādyupāyasevākṛta* (line 24). It may be ascertained that these services, offered to Samudragupta, were a gesture of friendship on the part of the overseas rulers to a neighbouring *Samrāt* or diplomatically speaking, to deter Samudragupta's, perhaps, future aggrandisement against those overseas rulers. The Gupta kings selected the Garuda token as their insignia, for, the Garuḍa bird was represented on the Gupta coins. The inscription further says that other powerful emperors were instrumental to bringing the whole of India within the fold of Samudragupta with the assistance of the strength of the latter's arms [*svabhujabala-parākramaikabandhoh parākramāṅkasya*—line—17 and *bāhu-vīrya-prasara-dharaṇi-bandhasya*—line 24].

Samudragupta's many-sided character has also been distinctly delineated in this inscription. He achieved conquests by his personal leadership [*saṁgrāmeṣu svabhuja-vijitāḥ*] ; his might crossed all the limitations [*udvelita-bāhu-vīrya*] ; several kings, unable to endure his prowess, was forced to offer him submission [*vīryot taptāśca kecic charaṇam upagatāḥ*] ; that he was a great fighter is strengthened by the statement that he was a successful hero of about a hundred battles [*vividha-samara-śata-dakṣasya*] ; his charming physique appeared more beautiful because of the marks of decoration in the forms of scars caused by various weapons, such as, axe, arrow, spear, spike, sword, etc. cf. *paraśu-śara-śaṅku-śakti-prāsāsi-tomara-bhindipāla-nārāca-vaitastikādyaneka-praharaṇa-virūḍhākula-vra-*

ṇa-śatāṅka-śobhā-samudayopacita-kāntatara-varṣmaṇaḥ (lines 17-18). Samudragupta has been eulogised as a god among human beings and it is stated that like god Viṣṇu, he was also beyond comprehension ; he was the encouragement of the honest and annihilator of the dishonest [*sādhvasādhūdaya-pralaya-hetu-puruṣasyācintasya*—line 25]. This laudation reminds us of the verse of the Gītā (IV. 8)—*paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām | dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya saṁbhavāmi yuge yuge ||*

Samudragupta was a great philanthropist also. Though a severe extirminator of the enemies, he harboured a soft and compassionate feeling for those 'who deserved it by their humility and regard for him' [*bhaktyavanatimātra-grāhya-mṛduhṛdayasya*—line 25]. That he was a man of charitable disposition is discernible from his 'gifts of hundreds of thousands of cows' [*aneka-go-śata-sahasra-prodāyinaḥ*]. He used to be worried for the relief of "the lowly, the poor, the destitute and the afflicted" [*kṛpaṇa-dīnānāthātura-janoddharaṇa-mantra-dīkṣābhyupagata-manasaḥ*—line 26]. In fact, he was a bright figure of philanthropy [*samiddhasya vigrahavato lokānu-grahasya*—line 26]. All these attributes cannot be merely over-elaboration, but testify to various aspects of Samudragupta's character and personality. Other inscriptions and coins of his time also lend support to his greatness not only as a king but as a man also.

Hariṣeṇa's panegyric can be distinctly marked as a fine specimen of Kāvya literature and it gives support to the fact that court-poetry was a subject most assiduously cultivated in the fourth century A.D.[5] This inscription comprises thirty-

5. G. Buhler—The Indian Inscriptions and the Antiquity of Indian Artificial poetry, Indian Antiquary, Vol. XLII, 1913, p. 172.

three lines consisting of eight verses in the beginning, a long prose passage and a concluding verse. Of the eight verses, only nos. 3 and 4 are fully preserved and other six verses suffer more or less from occasional loss of words. The author claims that this *praśasti* is to be regarded as a *kāvya*. [*etacca kāvyam eṣām eva bhaṭṭārakapādānāṁ dāsasya*—line 31].

While the Junāgadh inscription of Rudradāman is purely in prose, Hariṣena's work contains both prose and verse and, therefore, it belongs to the type of mixed composition which is usually known as Campū [cf. *gadyapadyamayaṁ kāvyaṁ campūr ityabhidhīyate*|—Sāhityadarpana, VI. 312]. As it is entirely devoted to the loftly eulogy of king Samudragupta, this inscription may also be designated as *biruda* type of literature. [cf. *gadyapadyamayī rājastutir birudam ucyate*|—S. D. VI. 313.] The inscriptional composition has generally some resemblance to the *ākhyāyikā* type of prose works, for, it mainly preserves historical documents. The exploits of Samudragupta are contained in the long prose sentence associated with 'many adjectives as well as appositional phrases and a number of relative sentences.' This literary device in Hariṣeṇa's inscription was probably the source of inspiration for Bāna's Kādambarī and Harṣacarita which followed the spirit of ornamental and grandiloquent prose-style of Hariseṇa.

The present inscription is one of the best examples of artificial poetry because of the existence of a lot of long compounds in the prose parts. The verses are comparatively free from this technique. Of the *śabdālaṁkāra-s*, Hariṣena uses only the simplest kind of alliteration i.e. *varṇānuprāsa* and this occurs principally in the prose-portion [cf. *paraśu-śara-śaṅku-śakti-prāsāsi-tomāra*, line—17; *rāja-grahaṇa-mokṣānugrahajanita*,

line—20 ; *vigrahavato lokānugrahasya*, line—26]. Of the *arthālaṁkāra-s*, *rūpaka* is frequently used, and *upamā* and *śleṣa* very rarely. In *bhuvo vāhur ayam ucchritaḥ stambhaḥ* (line 30), the world *ucchrita* qualifics both the arm and the pillar ; it appears to be an illustration of *śleṣa*. Again in verse 9, the adjectival phrases—*uparyuparisañcayocchrita* and *aneka-mārga* may refer both to the glory (*yaśaḥ*) and to the river Ganges (*gāṅgaṁ payaḥ*). The phrase—*sādhvasādhūdayapra-layahetu puruṣasyācintasya* (line 25) expresses the sense—"of an incomprehensible prince who is the cause of the elevation of the good and of the destruction of the bad (and thus he resembles the unfathomable spirit Brahman)." According to Bühler, the poetic figure used here is *śleṣamulaṁ rūpakam* (IA. XLII, P. 176).

Hariṣeṇa does not pay much attention to the use of *alaṁ-kāra*, but he is interested, as Bühler points out, in the fine execution of the pictures of several situations under description, and in the choice as well as arrangement of words. Keith considers verse 4 as a rare example of the most perfect effects of Indian miniature word pictures.[6] It describes the time when, in the presence of Samudragupta's rivals at the court, Candra-gupta I declared Samudragupta as his successor :

āryo hītyupaguhya bhāvapiśunair utkarṇitai romabhiḥ sabhyeṣūcchvasiteṣu tulyakulajamlānānanodvīkṣitaḥ| snehavyāluli-tena bāṣpaguruṇā tattvekṣiṇā cakṣuṣā yaḥ pitrābhihito nirīkṣya nikhilāṁ pāhy evam urvīmiti || Bühler's remark on this verse is a real appreciation of Hariṣeṇa's poetic capacity. He says—"There is not a word which is unnecessary ; and one believes as if he sees the scene with his own eyes, how the old Candra-gupta, in the presence of his sons, each of whom hoped to

6. History of Sanskrit Literature, Oxford, 1956, p. 78.

have the highest fortune, and of his court household who were afraid lest the choice may fall on an unworthy person, turns round to his favourite son. The verse is one of the best productions the Indians have given us, in the domain of miniature-portraits, which is their forte. This very example would also illustrate Hariṣeṇa's special care for the choice and arrangement of words, a qualification which can be easily seen even in other parts of the composition, both metrical and prose". Hariṣeṇa's *praśasti* rightly deserves this laudation.

The language of the verses is, on the whole, simple and avoids compounds of extraordinary length. But in the prose-portion simple and uncompounded words are rare. On one occasion (lines 19-20), a compound word covers about 130 syllables. This type of compound forms, however, enhances the merit of prose-composition, as Daṇḍin admits that the grandeur of language rests in the frequency of compounds and it is the very life of prose [*ojaḥ samāsabhūyastvam etad gadyasya jīvitam* —Kāvyādarśa. I. 80]. As the prose delights in the long compounds and the verse eschews them, the style of Hariṣeṇa 'is markedly and undeniably of the Vaidarbha or southern manner'.[7] Daṇḍin further maintains that those who do not belong to the southern school, regard the inclusion of long compounds as one of the main features even in verses. [cf. *padye'pyadākṣiṇātyānām idam ekaṁ parāyaṇam* —Kāvyādarśa. I. 80.] This statement of Daṇḍin ensures Hariṣeṇa's adherence to the style of the southerners, the so-called *Vaidarbhī rīti*. It is also to be noted in this connection that shorter phrases have been interspersed in the midst of long compounds (cf. lines 11-12) for the purpose of enabling the reciter 'to draw his breath' and the hearer 'to catch the sense'.

7. Keith—H. S. L., p. 78.

Hariṣeṇa's poetic imagery spreads over the whole *praśasti.* Like a genuine classical poet, he sometimes uses sharp expressions ; the poetic niceties in this work justify that Hariṣeṇa's composition came to be prepared at an advanced stage of the Sanskrit literary perfection. This inscription sounds very reasonable when Bühler remarks that "the Sanskrit Kāvya, which owed its origin to the court-patronage, and which can exist only by means of the same, was assiduously cultivated at the courts", (IA. XLII, p. 179). Metres used in this inscription are *śargdharā* (verses 3, 5 and 8), *śārdūlavikrīḍita* (verses 4 and 7). *mandākrāntā* (verse 6) and *pṛthvī* (verse 9). Metres of verses 1 and 2 cannot be determined, for, they are greatly damaged.

* * *

The Eran stone pillar inscription of the time of Samudragupta, (335-375 A.D.)[8], is throughout in verse and the metre is *vasantatilakā.* This inscription is partly damaged ; the first six and the last two lines are totally broken. These lines also were probably composed in *vasantatilakā.* Including these eight lines there are altogether eight verses. Samudragupta is being praised in this *praśasti* for the erection of something, most probably a pillar, in a place in Airikina (=Eran), the city where he used to rejoice himself, for the sake of extending his fame [*svabhoganagarairikiṇapradeśe:...saṁsthāpitas svayaśaḥ - paribṛṁha—(bṛṁha ?)—ṇārtham* -lines 25-26]. The missing word at the beginning of line 25 (which, according to Dr. D. C. Sircar's hypothesis, is *stambhaḥ*[9]) disappoints us to find out the clue as to what was erected and in connection of what form of

8. CII. III. No. 2. pp. 20 f.
9. Select Inscriptions, Calcutta University, 1965, p. 270

religion. Judging from the shape and appearance of the stone on which the inscription is incised, Mr. Fleet thinks that the stone is the part of a temple (CII. III. pp. 19-20). The suggestion of General Cunninghum is that if the stone was attached to any of the existing ruins, it belonged most probably to the temple with a colossal figure of Viṣṇu (Archaeological Survey of India, vol. X, p. 89).

We do not as yet know the theme of the first verse as it is completely lost. The second verse is left with the following words:—*suvarṇṇadāne saṁvārutā nṛpatayaḥ pṛthu-rāghavādyāḥ*. It seems that the first part of this inscription contained names of some of Samudragupta's ancestors who surpassed even Pṛthu, Rāghava and other renowned kings in respect of distributing gold (among poor and needy). It may be inferred from this event that the Gupta kings were men of charitable disposition. Samudragupta has been compared to Dhanadā (Kubera) and Antaka (Yama) regarding respectively to pleasure and anger [*dhanadāntakatuṣṭikopatulyaḥ*—line 9]; he was honoured by his father with the title of *rājā* conferred on him through proper ceremonies; Samudragupta's father had in his mind great satisfaction on account of his son's devotion, correct judgement and valour [*tātena bhakti-naya-vikkrama-toṣitena rājaśabdavibhavair abhiṣecanādyaiḥ sammānitaḥ*—lines 14-15]. The inscription further states that as a king Samudragupta's valour was irresistible [*nṛpatir aprativāryavīryaḥ*—line 16]; he obtained Dattā (=Dattādevī) as his wife with manliness and prowess [*dāttasya pauruṣa-parākramadattaśulkā*—line 17].

This inscription contains compound words shorter than those in the Allahabad inscription; sometimes a word extends for about a full line. cf. *hastyaśva-ratna-dhana-dhānya-samṛddhi-yuktā* (line 18). As in many other

inscriptions, in the present one also, the author has taken a fancy to double-conjunctions, such as, *vikkrama*, *suvarṇṇa*, *vīryya*, etc. Unnecessary use of double particle, such as, *paribambhramīti*, is, perhaps, for the metre's sake. That the author was a promising poet is evidenced by his effort to compose verses like—*vīryyāṇi yasya ripavaśca raṇorjjitāni| svapnāntareṣvapi vicintya paritrasanti||* (lines 23-24). This verse may be regarded as an illustration of the figure of speech, named, *bhāvika*. Likewise, the author has transfused his poetic efficiency into the example of *samāsokti* in *pṛthvāyṁ yaśaḥ suvipulaṁ paribambhramītīti* (line 22) and of alliteration in *nṛpatir aprativāryavīryaḥ* (line 16).

In the expression—*dattāsya pauruṣaparākrama-dattaśulkā* (line 11), the word *dattā* appears to be a *nāmaikadeśa* and stands for *Dattādevī*, Samudragupta's wife. Here the author perhaps follows the Mahābhāṣya where *bhāmā* is cited as a *nāmaikadeśa* of *satyabhāmā*. The use of tautology like *pārthivagaṇas sakalaḥ* (line 11) seems also for the metre's sake. The style of this inscription is also *Vaidarbhī*. The importance of this inscription lies in the fact that it enlightens us about some personal affairs of Samudragupta and imparts much assistance to the construction of the Gupta history.

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The Mathurā pillar inscription of Candragupta II[10] is a remarkable epigraphical work in respect of determining the date of Candragupta II's accession on the throne. It contains these significant lines—*bhaṭṭāraka-mahārājādhirāja-śrī-candraguptasya vijayarājyasaṁvatsare pañcame kālānuvarttamāna-saṁvatsare ekaṣaṣṭhe, etc.* (lines 2-4)—showing that this

10. R. Bhandarkar—Ep. Indica, vol. XXI, pp. 8 f.

inscription, dated the Gupta year 61 (380 A. D ; the first year of the Gupta era was 319 A. D.), was issued in the fifth year of Candragupta II's reign. Therefore, his reign must have commenced five years back i. e., in 375 A. D. The importance of this inscription lies in the facts that it is the first Gupta inscription which records any date and that it mentions the earliest date of the Gupta era, so far available.

This inscription is in prose throughout. It "testifies to an off-shoot of Śaivism, the sect of Māheśvaras, flourishing at Mathurā under the teacher named Uditāchārya."[11] Uditāchārya is said to be preceded by Kapila-vimala and Upamita-vimala [*bhagavatkapila-vimala-śiṣyaśiṣyeṇa bhagavadupamita-vimala-śiṣyeṇa*—lines 6-7], He is also described as being tenth in descent from Bhagavat Kuśika [*bhagavat kuśikādda-śamena*] and fourth from Parāśara [*bhagavat parāśarāccatur-thena*]. The inscription further says that Uditācārya, for the sake of personal religious merit [*svapuṇyāpyāyananimittam*] and for propagating the glory of his teachers [*gurūṇāṁ ca kīrttyartham*], installed two images known as Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara in the 'shrine of the teachers' [*upamiteśvara-kapileśvarau gurvvāyatane gurupratimāyutau pratiṣṭhāpitau*—lines 9-10]. It appears that what were really installed were *liṅgas* along with the statues of the teachers. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee thinks that a *liṅga* was set up in the name of each teacher and the fact that it was set up in the *guru-āyatana* shows that the *liṅgas* were accompanied by the statues. (The Gupta Empire, p. 52). According to Dr. D. C. Sircar, the representations apparently showed as if Upamita and Kapila were standing each with a liṅga on the head (Select inscriptions, p. 278, f. n. 5). This part of the inscription speaks of

11. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee—The Gupta Empire, Bomboy, 1947, p. 52.

great devotion of a disciple to his teachers whose outstanding religious achievements, perhaps, influenced Uditācārya to embrace this religion.

A sense, suggested in this inscription, is that epigraphical works were also utilised for the propagation of personal fame, as Uditācārya admits that this monument is not erected for blowing self-propaganda [*naitat khyātyartham abhilikhyate*]. The monument is reported to be meant for giving information to and drawing the attention of those who belonged to the sect of the Māheśvaras [*atha māheśvarāṇāṁ vijñptiḥ kriyate sambodhanaṁ ca*—line 11], for the due consideration of the *ācāryas* that they should look after it as their own property [*yathākālenācāryāṇāṁ parigraham iti matvā*—line 12] and worship it with offerings without any reservation and with proper gifts [*viśaṅkaṁ pūjāpuraskāraṁ parigraha-pāripālyaṁ kuryād iti*—line 13]. In the conclusion, it is warned that an attempt to destroy the monument [*yaśca kīrtyabhidrohaṁ kuryād*] or to disfigure the writings, is sure to lead one to the region of great sins [*paṁcabhir mahāpātākai rupapātakaiśca saṁyuktas syāt*—line 16]. This warning is, perhaps, for the reason that there were spasmodic attempts to devastate or impure the religious monuments by some atheists or vicious-minded people. This inscription, as a whole, furnishes us with a very clear idea of religious toleration during the age of the Guptas. Staunch followers of the Vaiṣṇavism though the Gupta kings were, their subjects could belong to any sect or follow any religion. This inscription makes it clear that in spite of the absence of direct royal patronage, Śaivism with its several sects was in an elevated position.

This inscription is written in insipid prose and signs of artistic style are difficult to trace here. On the other hand, there

are some irregular forms which are, perhaps, the result of Prākṛt influence. Thus, *ekaṣaṣṭhe*—(line 4) is used in place of *ekaṣaṣṭhitame*; *pratiṣṭhāpito* (line 10) is the last word of a sentence—the *visarga* having changed to *O*; the form *parigraham it* (line 13) should be correctly read as *parigraha iti*; *kuryād iti* (line 14) has been used in relation to the subject *māheśvarāḥ* and the correct verbal form should be *kuryuḥ iti*.

From the point of view of both style and diction, this inscription is much inferior to the Allahabad pillar inscription, though written not much later than the latter. But that the author was not absolutely ignorant of the current literary trend is evidenced by his favouritism to the use of alliteration, as in—*āryyoditācāryeṇa* (line 8). *gurvvāyatane gurupratimā* (line 10), *parigraha-pāripālyam* (line 14), etc. The language is simple because of the restriction on compound forms. The last line i. e. *jayati ca bhagavān daṇḍaḥ rudrdaṇḍo*, etc. appears to be the half of a stanza in the *Āryā* or *Giti* metre.

The Udayagiri cave inscription of Candragupta II, dated 401 A.D.,[12] is a small prose composition. Its date is given as the Gupta year 82 (=401 A.D.) and is said to be written on the eleventh lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āṣādha [*saṁvatsare 80+2 āṣāḍhamāsaśuklaikādaśyām*]. The inscription records a suitable religious gift [*deyadharmmaḥ*] by a chief [*mahārāja*] of Sanakānika tribe or family, who served Candragupta as his lord [*paramabhaṭṭāraka-mahārājādhirāja-śrī-candragupta-pādānudhyātasya*]; he was the son of Viṣṇudāsa [*mahārājaviṣṇudāsaputrasya*] and grandson of one Chagalaga [*mahārājachagalagapautrasya*]. Dr. R. K. Mukherjee holds that this chief "must have been

12. C II, III, pp. 25 f.

one of the governors in charge of parts of eastern Malwa conquered by Samudragupta and visited by Candragupta as the place of preparation for his expedition towards the south."[13] The cave, in which this inscription was found, appears, according to Fleet, to be a Vaiṣṇava cave and this inscription must, therefore, be a Vaiṣṇava inscription (C 11. III. p. 23). This inscription, comprising of only two incomplete lines, is in simple prose and it is of little importance from literary perspective.

Another Uayagiri cave inscription of Candragupta II (date not mentioned)[14] is of Śaivaite character and consists of five verses all composed in *anuṣṭubh* metre. The first two lines are partly damaged. This inscription depicts Candragupta II as a *digvijayin* [cf. *kṛtsṇapṛthvījayārthena*]. He is said to have bought, by his valour, the earth [*vikramāvakrayakrītā*] where all the other kings were reduced to the humiliated state of slavery [*dāsya-nyagbhūta-pārthivā*]. This inscription further records that Vīrasena, otherwise called Śāba, belonging to the Kautsa gotra [*kautsaś śāba iti khyāto vīrasenaḥ kulākhyayā*—line 4], who was well-versed in the philosophy of words and logic as well as in the human character [*śabdārtha-nyāya-lokajña*], accompanied Candragupta to Udayagiri [*rājñaiveha samāgataḥ*] and caused to excavate the cave to be used as the residence of Lord Śambhu [*bhaktyā bhagavataś śambhor guhām etām akārayat*—line 5]. Vīrsena is reported to be a poet and he hailed from Pāṭalīputra [*kaviḥ pāṭālīputrakaḥ*] ; by hereditary right, he became Candragupta's Minister of Peace and War [*anvayaprāpta-sācivyo vyāpṛta-sandhivigrahaḥ*—line 3]. It may be ascertained here that this

13. The Gupta Empire, Bombay, 1947, p. 49.

14. C 11. III. No. 6. pp. 35 f.

inscription points to the hereditary succession of the ministers of the Gupta kings. But it was obviously not the regular practice. For, even in the cases of the Gupta kings, succession was regulated by merit rather than birth. It thus appears that the Gupta era followed no hard and fast rule in the matter of succession. It was both ascriptive as well as achieved, as the occasion demanded.

This inscription also is small in size, but it contains some elements relating to the author's poetic efficiency. The first verse, though some of its words are lost, appears to be an illustration of good simile. Thus, the available words form the following sentence—*antarjjyotir arkābham urvyāṁ bhāti candraguptākhyam adbhutam.* Here *arka* (sun) and *Candragupta* have been compared with each other and are connected with the common attribute—*antarjjyoti* which means 'radiant with internal light' in the case of the sun and 'full of internal power' in the case of Candragupta; thus it is an instance of *śleṣa.* Illustrations of alliteration as well as of the figure of speech, metaphor, are perfectly blended in the expression *vikramāva-krayakrītā* ("bought by the purchase-money of his prowess"). The adjective of Vīrasena, *anvayaprāptasācivya* ("he holds his position acquired by hereditary rights") seems to be an example of *kāvyaliṅga-alaṁkāra.*

So far as various achievements of the kings or their feudatories are some of the principal objects of description of the Gupta inscriptions, there are frequent occurrences of the figure of speech, *parikara*, which is defined by Viśvanātha in his Sāhityadarpana as—*uktir viśeṣaṇaiḥ sābhiprāyaiḥ parikaro mataḥ.* The present inscription is also replete with the illustrations of this *alaṁkāra.* The language is simple Sanskrit

and the compound forms are confined to, at best, three words. The style is Vaidarbhī.

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The Sāñcī stone inscription of Candragupta II, dated the Gupta Year 93[15](=412-413 A.D.), is entirely in prose. It is a Buddhist inscription. It records the grant, perhaps, of a village or an allotment of land, called Īśvaravāsaka and the cash endowment of 25 *dīnāras*, to the community of Buddhist monks, called *Ārya-saṁgha*, by Āmrakārddava, son of Undāna. We know from this inscription that Candragupta had another name of Devarāja [*mahārājādhirāja-śrī-candraguptasya devarāja iti priyanāmnaḥ*—line-7]. Amrakārddava is said to have hailed from Sakuli-deśa ; he was one of the respectable ministers of Candragupta ; due to the favour of the king, he could lead a comfortable life [*mahārājādhirājaśrīcandragupta-pādaprasādāpyāyita-jīvita-sādhanaḥ*—line 3] and he was very loyal to the king instead ; Āmrakārddava acquired wide reputation because of his fighting and victory in many a battle [*anekasamarāvāpta-vijayayaśas patākaḥ*—line-4].

The *Ārya-saṁgha* belonged to the great *vihāra* at Kākanāda-boṭa i.e. Sāñcī [*kākanādaboṭa-śrī-mahāvihāre*]. The Buddhist community, who resided there, consisted of most excellent monks [*śramaṇapuṅgavāvasathāya*] who thronged there from different parts of the country [*caturdig abhyāgatāya*] and whose sense-organs were controlled by their good qualities, meditation and vast wisdom [*śīlasamādhi-prajñāguṇabhāvitendriyāya*—line-1].

This inscription is an ample proof of the religious traits of the Guptas. The Gupta emperors themselves were orthodox

15. C II. III. No. 5. pp. 31 f.

Hindus. Candragupta II had the Vaisnava title *paramabhāgavata*, referred to in several Gupta inscriptions, but is remarkably absent in the present inscription—the latter being a Buddhist record. It is interesting to note that Amrakārddava, a reputed minister of the Gupta monarch, shows his deep reverence for the Buddhist religion. It is a notable evidence of catholic attitude to all orthodox and heterodox religious beliefs in the Gupta empire.

It transpires from this inscription that the *Āryasaṁgha* also undertook Banking operations. Āmrakārddava's donation of 25 dīnāras was intended for permanent deposit with the community ; of the interest accrued from the money, half was meant for feeding daily five *bhikṣu-s* and for burning a lamp in the jewel-house ("probably the *stūpa* as the abode of the three *Ratnas* or jewels, viz. the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṁgha") in the *vihāra* "as long as the moon and the sun exist" [*yāvac-candrādityau tāvat pañcabhikṣavo bhuṁjatāṁ ratnagṛhe ca dīpako jvalatu*—lines 8-9] ; the other half of the interest, which probably belonged to Āmrakārddava himself, was also directed to be used for the same purpose [*mama cāparārdhāt pañcaiva bhikṣavo bhuṁjatāṁ ratnagṛhe ca dīpako jvalatu*—lines 9-10]. Thus the Saṁgha functioned "as a bank of deposit and also as a trustee, holding in safe custody, and in perpetuity, a fund in aid of the beneficiaries, fixed by the donor, while keeping the corpus of the donation intact." (Mukherjee—Gupta Empire, p. 51). It may be presumed that the existence of Bank in so remote a period spoke of the economic concept amidst the religious activities. A similar transaction is seen in the Gadhwa stone inscription of Candragupta II, dated 407 A.D. (C I I. III, No. 7, pp 37 f.) ; it is a Brahmanical inscription and records two gifts of ten *dīnāras* each, apparently as a contribution to a Brahmanical institution, a perpetual alms-house or a charitable

hall for its Brāhmaṇa community [*sadā-sattra-sāmānya-brāhmaṇa*]. This gift was made by the wife of a house-holder [*gṛhasthasya bhāryā*] possibly out of her *strīdhana*, for the purpose of furthering her own religious pursuit [*ātmapuṇyopa-cayārtham*]. This gift, according to Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, shows that the religious sense of the people encouraged endowments of social service as a form of worshipping God through service of man (Gupta Empire, p. 52).

The style of the composition of Sāñcī inscription appears to be Vaidarbhī ; it has no unnecessary lengthy compounds, and short and long words are proportionately used. The adjectives of *āryasaṁghāya* are arranged in such a way thatthey bring forth an effective rhythmic sound, cf. *śīla-samādhiprajñā-guṇa-bhāvitendriyāya parama-puṇya-kṣetragatāya caturdig abhyāgatāya śramaṇa-puṅgavāvasathāya āryasaṁghāya* (lines 1-2). There are some pleasing alliterations, such as, *śrī-candragupta-pādaprasā-dāpyāyita-jīvita-sādhanaḥ* (line 3) and *satpuruṣasadbhāvavṛttyar-tham* (line 3). Excepting a single instanee of metaphor in *vijayayaśaspatākaḥ*, there is no remarkable illustration of *arthālaṁkāra*. The inscription has maintained the lucidity of style, as is illustrated in sentences like—*yāvac candrādityau tāvat pañcabhikṣavo bhuñjatām*. The minor grammatical irregularity like *pañcaviṁśatiśca dīnārān* in place of *pañcaviṁśatiñca dīnārān* is not to be taken seriously, for, these types of forms repeatedly occur in the inscriptional writings, probably, in most cases because of the writer's carelessness or Prākṛt influence.

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The Meharaulī iron pillar inscription of Candra[16] is of Vaiṣṇava character and is not dated. It is in three verses, all

16. C11. III. No. 32 pp. 141 f.

composed in *śārdūlavikrīḍita* metre. It now stands near the well-known Kutub Minar in Mihirapurī, about nine miles south of Delhi. It was originally located on a hill near the Beas and brought to its present place by a ruler of Delhi. The identification of king Candra is one of the most disputed problems of the Gupta history. On some deeper historical grounds, this Candra has been accepted as Candragupta II. It may be pointed out that the king has been mentioned as Candra in some types of copper coins attributed to Candragupta II. Dr. D. C. Sircar, having compared some accounts mentioned in other inscriptions and coins with those of the iron pillar inscription, has come to the conclusion that[17] the facts related in the Meharaulī inscription, viz., "(1) that the name of the king was Candra, (2) that he went on a *digvijaya,* (3) that he was lord of an empire, (4) that the Delhi region formed part of his kingdom and (5) that he was a Vaiṣṇava", suggest no other than a monarch like Candragupta II.

The first verse adds to the credit of king Candra that he possesed an arm on which fame was inscribed by sword [*abhilikhitā khaḍgena kīrttir bhuje*] and refers successively to the achievements—(1) conquest of the Vaṅga countries by turning down a league of enemies united against him [*śatrūn sametyāgatān*], (2) conquest of the Vāhlikas after having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the river Sindhu [*tīrtvā sapta mukhāni yena samare sindhorjjitā vāhlikāḥ*], and (3) extension of his prowess as far as the southern oceans [*yasyādyāpyadhivāsyate jalanidhir vīryānilair dakṣiṇaḥ*]. From these accounts it appears that king Candra traversed a wide range of territory, of which the verse gives only the extreme limits. Thus the eastern limit was Vaṅga, the southern limit was the ocean, the western limit

17. Select Inscriptions, p. 283, f-n. 1.

was the mouths of the Indus [*sapta sindhor mukhāni*] and the northern limit was the Vāhlika country. The reality of this inscription cannot be fully supported by historical records related with the boundaries of Candragupta II's territory. Dr. D. C. Sircar, therefore, maintains that[18] it is a *praśasti* "which may have germs of truth, but is conventional and may not be entirely historical." To show the supremacy of king Candra, the third verse relates his attainment of supreme sovereignty in the world [*aikādhirājyaṁ kṣitau*] by the strength of his arms [*svabhujārjjitam*] ; this verse also records as to how the king celebrated his conquests by setting up the lofty standard of Viṣṇu on the hill known as Viṣṇupada (not far from the river Beas) [*prāṁśur viṣṇupade girau bhagavato viṣṇor dhvajaḥ sthāpitaḥ*].

This inscription, according to Fleet (CII. III. p. 140), is a posthumous record of the conquests of the king. This view can be supported in respect of the contents of the first half of the 2nd verse. The verse contains the sense that the king, as if wearied [*khinnasyeva*], has left this earth [*visṛjya gāṁ*] and gone to the other world [*gām āśritasyetarām*] ; his body has reached the heavenly land won by his renowned activities [*mūrttyā karmmajitāvanim*], but he stayed on this earth by his fame [*kīrttyā sthitasya kṣitau*]. Dr. Sircar thinks that the pillar was erected by Candragupta II about the end of his life, but the record was engraved by Kumāragupta I soon after his father's death (Select Inscriptions, p. 214, f. n. 5). This view seems to be more reasonable.

The verses of this inscription are instances of true ornate poetry and all of them convey wide meaning. They are also

18. Select Ins., p. 284. f. n. 1.

fine illustrations of well-known figures of speech. The poet devises the plan to show his skill in exemplifying two figures of speech at a time, which was not a very familiar technique with the earlier writers of inscriptions. Thus *atiśayokti* and *rūpaka* are simultaneously nurtured, with their respective grandeur, in the line—*yasyādyāpyadhivāsyate jalanidhir vīryānilair dakṣiṇaḥ*. Again, in the second half of verse 2, viz., *śāntasyeva mahāvane hutabhujo yasya pratāpo mahān / nādyāpyutsṛjati praṇāśitaripor yatnasya śeṣaḥ kṣitim //* —we can trace a perfect unification of the figures, *upamā* and *atiśayokti*. Here the deceased Candragupta is compared to the burnt-out fire and it is stated that even after his passing away, Candragupta's prowess leaves not the earth. In the first part of this verse, the expression—*khinnasyeva visṛjya gāṁ narapateḥ* is a good case of *utprekṣā*. The expressions like—*kīrttyā sthitasya kṣitau* glorifying *kīrtti* as the spouse of the king, and—*candrāhvena samagracandra-sadṛśīṁ vaktraśriyaṁ vibhratā*, bearing the sense that king Candra has a facial charm like the beauty of the full moon,—reveal the poet's mature poetic imagination.

The first two verses express the sense of heroic sentiment. The inscription as a whole is a genuine literary creation and distinctly marks the creative period of Sanskrit ornate poetry. The poet, who probably belonged to the Vaidarbha school, is unknown to us like many other inscriptional authors, but he had undoubtedly high poetic prospect.

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The Bilsad stone pillar inscription of Kumārgupta I (CII. III. No. 10, pp. 43 f.) refers to Kumārgupta's reign of ever-extending victory and mentions the date of this inscription as the Gupta year 96 (=415 A. D.) which is also the earliest date

recorded about Kumārgupta. [*cf. mahārājādhirāja-śrī-kumāra-guptasyābhivardhamānavijaya-rājyasaṁvatsare ṣaṇṇavate*—line 6]. This inscription begins with a full genealogical list of the Gupta kings. The genealogy upto Kumārgupta I is mentioned in the same pattern as is done in other later Gupta inscriptions. The list runs thus—*mahārāja-śrī-gupta-prapauttrasya mahārāja-śrī-ghaṭotkaca - pauttrasya mahārājādhirāja - śrī - candragupta-puttrasya licchavi-dauhittrasya mahādevyāṁ kumāradevyām utpannasya mahārājādhirāja-śrī-samudragupta-puttrasya mahā-devyāṁ dattadevyām utpannasya svayam apratirathasya parama-bhāgavatasya mahārājādhirāja-śrī-candragupta-puttrasya mahā-devyāṁ dhruvadevyām utpannasya mahārājādhirāja-śrī-kumāra-guptasya* (—lines 3-6). This chronological list has been generally supported by other historical records.

This inscription testifies to the existence of the worship of Kārtikeya during Kumārgupta's time. It mentions a temple [*āyatana*] of Svāmī Mahāsena (i.e. Kārtikeya), also known as god Brahmaṇya of a wondrous form, surrounded by the lustre of the three worlds [*trailokya-tejas-saṁbhāra-saṁtatādbhuta-mūrtter-brahmaṇyadevasya*—line 7]. This temple was equipped with some architectural works by a devotee, named Dhruva-śarman who followed the path of true religion [*saddharma-vartmānuyāyinā*—line 8] and who was respected by the assembly [*parṣadā mānitena*—line 9]. Dhruvaśarman's accomplishments in the temple included—(1) a *pratolī* or a gateway having a flight of steps as if leading to the heaven [*svarga-sopāna-rūpām*], appearing as a pearl-necklace known as *kauberacchanda* [*kauberacchandabimbām*] and being white with the radiance of crystal gems [*sphaṭika-maṇidalābhāsa-gaurām*]; (2) a *muni-vasati* or a rest-house for the mendicants; (3) a *dharma-sattra* or alms-house appearing in form as the top portion of a temple [*prā-sādāgrābhirūpam*]; and (4) a firm and worth-seeing lofty pillar

[*sthiravarastambhocchrayaḥ kāritaḥ*]. This inscription gives evidence of architectural excellence during the reign of Kumārgupta I. The word *muni vasati* shows that devout devotees of the religion did have a shelter adjacent to the temple. The term *dharma-sattra* corroborates the idea that temples had attached charitable institutions wherefrom the temple authorities rendered help to the poor and the devotees.

This inscription is in prose as far as the end of line 9, and concludes with two verses—one in *sragdharā* and the other in *śārdūlavikrīḍita*. Occasional influence of Prākṛt is detectable, as in *ṣaṇṇavate* (line 6) the correct form of which should be *ṣaṇṇavatitame* ; the form—*karma mahat kṛtedam* (line 9) contains a wrong Sandhi, the actual form being *kṛtam idam*. Though the style is not marked with any speciality, in some places we find a little poetic relief. Thus, *kauberacchandabimbaṁ sphaṭika-maṇi-dalābhāsa-gauraṁ pratolīm* (line 10) appears to be an illustration of simile. In the sentence—*śubhamatis tātaśarmā dhruvo'stu* (line 11), there is a play on the meaning ; here the term *dhruva* bears the sense of 'immovable, stable, enduring' and, therefore, the word *śarmā* is a *nāmaikadeśa* and stands for the whole name *Dhruvaśarmā*. Or it may be that the surname *Śarmā* has been placed first and then the real name Dhruva.

The author's fascination for the long metres is, perhaps, for the reason that literature was slowly approaching from the stage of naturality to that of complexity. For the sake of metre, the author sometimes takes the help of tautology as is noticed in the word—*vibhūtisañcayacayaiḥ* (line 13). But this word may have been coined for the poet's fondness of alliteration ; to make his prose charming to some extent, he often attempts to display traditional illustrations of alliterations, as in *tejassaṁbhāra-*

saṁtata (line 7). *saddharma-vartmānuyāyinā* (line 8), etc, On the whole, this inscription demands appreciation not only for valuable information regarding Gupta art and charitable deeds, but also for its poetic merit.

* * * *

The Gaṅgdhār stone inscription of Viśvavaman, dated 423 A. D.,[19] is an important epigraphical piece from literary point of view. It is composed in twenty-five verses. It records how Mayūrākṣaka, a minister of Viśvavarman (the latter was perhaps a feudatory of Kumāragupta) built a temple of Lord Viṣṇu [*viṣṇoḥ sthānam*] resembling the lofty peak of the mountain Kailāsa [*kailāsatuṅga-śikhara-pratimasya*] and a terrible abode [*vesmātyugram*] of the divine Mothers [*mātṛṇām*] and also excavated a large well and filled it with cool and sweet drinking water [*śīta-svādu-viśuddha-bhūri-salilam*]. This inscription indicates how in the same family devotion was offered equally to the two apparently opposed cults of Vaiśṇavism and Tantrikism. It thus shows the absence of at least religious fanaticism in the period under review. The temple of the divine mothers is said to be filled with Dākinīs or female ghosts who tremendously and loudly shouted in joy and stirred up the oceans with ghastly winds originated from the performance of *tantric* rites [*tantrodbhūta-prabalapavanodvartitāmbhonidhīnām......dākinī-saṁprakīrṇṇam*—line 36-37].

The inscriptions often speak of the cities being decorated by the kings or by their officers. The Gaṅgdhār inscription mentions Viśvavarman's city, which seems to be his provincial capital, built on the bank of the river Gargarā [*gargarā-taṭa-puram*—line 23 ; Gargarā has been supposed by Dr. Sircar to be the ancient name of the modern Kālisindh, a tributary of the

19. CII. III. No. 17, pp. 74 f.

Cambal—Select Ins. p. 403, f. n. 4] ; the city was equipped with "wells of irrigation, tanks, temples and halls of gods, drinking wells, parks of various kinds, cause-ways and reservoirs of water". [*vāpī-taḍāga-surasadma-sabhodupāna-nānāvidhopavana-saṁkrama-dīrghikābhiḥ*—line 22]. This description reveals that the Gupta rulers possessed remarkable skill in town-planning.

The verses of this inscription are composed in three metres—*vasantatilakā*, *śārdūlavikrīḍita* and *mandākrāntā*. Thus, without giving the illustration of various metres, the author has concentrated his attention to only three principal metres. This was also the general trend of the later poets whose poems included one principal metre in each canto. This inscription is replete with beautiful descriptive verses. In dealing with the characters of Naravarman, Viśvavarman and of Mayūrākṣaka, an elegant style marked by the exuberance of craftsmanship is employed. The descriptive passages are occasionally imbued with effective rhetoric. To cite an example, when excellent achievements of Naravarman are delineated, it is stated that his enemies in the battlefield are destroyed by simply seeing his face [*saṅgrāmamūrddhasu mukhaṁ samudīkṣya yasya / nāśaṁ prayāntyarigaṇā bhayanaṣṭaceṣṭāḥ //*- verse 4]. This verse is an illustration of *atiśayokti* and the word *khaḍgamarīcimatsu* [adj of *saṅgrāmamurddhasu*] can be easily recognised as an suitable example of metaphor. When Viśvavarman is described as—*aupamyabhūta iva rāmabhagīrathābhyām* etc.—(verse-5) it seems to be a fine illustration of *upāma* as well as of *utprekṣā*. Again, when we go through the verse—*dhairyeṇa merum abhijātiguṇena vaiṇyam/ induṁ prabhāsamudayena balena viṣṇum /*—(verse-6), the figure of speech, *ullekha* appears to have been illustrated here. Verse 8, containing the sense that Viśvavarman was shown obeisance by the water lilies in the form of the faces of lovely women of his enemies, frightened beforehand at the news of his

prowess [cf. *yasyārikāmini—(nī ?)—mukhāmburuhair balasya/ pūrvaṁ pratāpa-cakitaiḥ kriyate praṇāmaḥ //*], may be accepted as a fair illustration of the *saṅkarālaṁkāra* comprising *atiśayokti*, *rūpaka* and *kāvyaliṅga*. A unique poetic imagination is present in a verse which combines in itself both *atiśayokti* and *utprekṣā* in a perfect way ; the verse contains the idea that due to Viśvavarman's prominence, the highways are made uneven and at the time of the journeying of his army, the earth, as it were, sinks down under the tread of his soldiers.

cf. *yasyonnata-praviṣamīkṛta-ṛājamārgāḥ/*
sainya-prayāna-samaye (bhūḥ) vinimajjatīva //

(verse 10). In this way the author has sufficiently established his efficiency in utilising familiar figures of speech.

The poet's expertness in characterisation is best illustrated in the delineation of Mayurākṣaka who is said to have sprung from a family renowned for wisdom and valour [*prajñāśauryakulodgata*], whose physical strength was reckoned with in every region [*diśi diśi prakhyātavīryaḥ*], and who had the self-controlling capacity (*vaśī*). The poet's power of observation is to be noticed in the description of the Viṣṇu temple, of the divine Mothers and of the drinking-well. In these descriptions, the author has left notable marks of his genuine poetic talent.

The author has a tendency towards giving, sometimes, the lines of the verses a harmonious ending i.e., ending with the same syllable. For example, *nābhud adharmanirato vyasanānvito vā / loke kadācana janas sukhavarjito vā //* (verse 13) and *śukle trayodaśadine bhuvi kārttikasya/ māsasya sarvajanacittasukhāvahasya //* (verse 14). This harmony of syllables certainly gives the verses a musical sound and this trend of versification is not very frequent even in the works of the classical poets. It may be safely concluded that this inscription, in relation to the earlier

ones, shows a step of advancement as well as betterment in respect of epigraphic Kāvya elements.

* * *

The Udayagiri cave inscription, dated the Gupta year 106 i.e. 425 A. D., (CII. III. No. 61, pp. 258 f) refers itself to the period of the Gupta kings [*guptānvayānāṁ nṛpasattamānāṁ rājye*], but does not specifically mention the name of the king. The year, recorded in the inscription, shows that the latter belongs to the reign of Kumāragupta I. It is a Jaina inscription and records the construction of an image of Jina-vara-Pārśva [*jinavara-pārśva-saṁgikāṁ jinākṛtim*—line 3] at the mouth of a cave [*guhāmukhe*], by a Jaina monk renowned by the name, Śaṅkara [*śaṅkaranāmaśabdito*]; he hailed from the northern region resembling the land of Utttarakuru [*sa uttarāṇāṁ sadṛśe kurūṇām udag-diśā-deśa-vare prasūtaḥ*—line 7]. This inscription shows that like Brahmanism and Buddhism, Jainism also received tolerant outlook from the Gupta kings.

With the exception of the opening invocation (*namaḥ siddhebhyaḥ*), the inscription is in verse throughout. It has five verses, serially illustrating the metres—*indravajrā, rucirā, indravajrā, vaṁśastha* and *upendravajrā*. The verses are framed in perfect classical style and are accompanied occasionally with illustrations of alliteration, as evidenced in the lines like *sphuṭa-vikaṭotkaṭām imām* (line 8) and *udag-diśā-deśa-vare* (line 7). The poet is so enthusiastic about the perfection of the rules of metre that he sometimes overlooks ungrammatical forms. Thus, in the third verse we have the line—*padmāvatāvaśvapater bhaṭasya* where the erroneous form, *padmāvatau*, is used in the locative case of the word—*padmāvatī*. This inscription, however, shows improvement in the rules of Sandhi, excepting in two or three

instances where the rule is violated. No remarkable figure of speech is noticeble in this inscription. The present inscription remains in a state of perfect preservation having no loss of its words.

* * *

The Karamdāṇḍā stone liṅga inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I, dated the Gupta year 117 (=436 A. D.)[20] marks a victorious achievement of the king [*mahārājādhirāja-śrī-kumāraguptasya vijaya - rājya - saṁvatsara-śate-saptadaśottare*]. This inscription is remarkable from social as well as religious point of view. It is a Śaiva inscription composed in prose. It begins with an invocation to Mahādeva [*namo mahādevāya*]- We are told that Śikharasvāmin was the minister and *Kumārāmātya* (probably an executive officer) of Candragupta II [*mahārājādhirājā-śrī-candraguptasya mantrī kumārāmātyaś śikharasvāmyabhūt*—line 6] ; he was the son of Viṣṇupālitabhaṭṭa and the grandson of Kumāravyabhaṭṭa who belonged to the *Aśvavājin* gotras and used to teach the Chāndogya texts [*chāndogyācāryāśvavāji-sagotra—kuramāravyabhaṭṭasya putro viṣṇupālitabhaṭṭas tasya putro*—lines 4-5]. The inscription does not mention whether Śikharasvāmin's father and grandfather held any royal office.

Śikharasvāmin's son, Pṛthiviṣeṇa was the minister and *Kumārāmātya* and later on the *Mahābalādhikṛt* (field-marshal) of Kumāragupta I [*tasya putraḥ pṛthīvīṣeṇo mahārājādhirāja-śrī-kumāraguptasya mantrī kumārāmātyo' nantaraṁ ca mahābalādhikṛtaḥ*—lines 7-8]. Pṛthiviṣeṇa made a gift, with suitable religious offerings, for the worship of Pṛthivīśvara (Mahādeva) which is probably the name of the *liṅga* on which this inscription is

20. Sten Konow—Epigraphia Indica, vol. X, pp. 71 f.

incised [*bhagavato mahādevasya pṛthivīśvara ityevaṁ samākhyātasyāsyaiva bhagavato yathākarttavya-dhārmika-karmaṇā pāda-śuśrūṣaṇāya*—lines 8-9]. The concluding lines of the inscription (the last line is totally destroyed) state that the donees were the Brāhmanas from Ayodhyā, and lived in the vicinity of Mahādeva Śaileśvara; they "belonged to various *gotras* and *caraṇas* and were proficient in *tapa* and *svādhyāya*, ascetic practices and Vedic study, in *Mantra*, *Sūtra*, *Bhāṣya* and *Pravacana*" (lines 10-11). Here is an indication of the daily duties of the Brāhmanas who represented the highest standard of intellectual, religious and moral life. The inscription ends abruptly with the term *devadroṇyāṁ*; *Devadroṇi* is the name of the festival when a procession of images or idols, most probably of Śiva, was taken out.

In this connection, it may be pointed out that Mr. K. P. Jayaswal has attempted to identify Kamāndaka, the author of the *Nītisāra*, with Śikharasvāmin (of the Karamdāṇḍā inscription), the minister of Candragupta II[21]. But this view has been accepted by none and it is generally held that Kāmandaka appeared not much later than Kauṭilya and perhaps he was Kauṭilya's direct disciple. The Karamdāṇḍā inscription, which gives us so much information about Śikharasvāmin, makes no mention of him as an author and, therefore, it is difficult to accept Śikharasvāmin and Kāmandaka as one and the same person.

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The Mandasor stone inscription mentioning Kumāragupta I

21. "The book of Political Science by Śikhara—Prime-Minister of Candragupta II".—Journ. of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol XVIII, Part I, p. 39.

and Bandhuvarman[22] and bearing two dates (436 A.D. and 473 A.D.) is generally recognised as a noteworthy specimen of highly developed epigraphical poetry. This inscription is composed in forty-four verses and the poet is named as Vatsabhaṭṭi. It speaks of the popularity of solar worship at that time. It describes how a guild of expert silk-cloth-weavers [*jagati prathitaśilpāḥ*] immigrated from the district of Lāṭa adorned with lofty trees bedecked with innumerable flowers, with assembly halls of the gods and *vihāra-s* [*kusumabharānata-taruvara-devakula-sabhā-vihāra-ramaṇīyāt lāṭa-viṣayāt*—verse 4] and settled at the city, called Daśapura (modern Mandasor), where the weavers took up various occupations. The city of Daśapura is described as being embraced by two charming rivers having smarting rolling waves [*yadbhātyabhiramya-sariddvayena capalormiṇā samupagūḍham*—verse 13] and decorated with series of storyed mansions like rows of aerial chariots [*prāsāda-mālābhir alaṁkṛtāni vimāna-mālā-sadṛśāni yatra gṛhāni*—verse 12]. The houses were also decorated with paintings [*niviṣṭa-citra-karmmāṇi*] and sounded with musical notes [*gāndharva-śabda-mukharāṇi*]; they were white-coloured and were of considerable height [*atyartha-śuklānyadhikonnatāni*].

At that time, when Bandhuvarman, son of Viśvavarman, was ruling the prosperous city, Daśapura [*tasminneva kṣiti-pativṛṣe bandhuvarmaṇyudāre/ samyaksphītaṁ daśapuram idaṁ pālayatyunnatāṁse//*—verse—29], the silk-cloth weavers built there a temple of the sun [*śreṇībhūtair bhavanam atulaṁ kāritaṁ dīptaraśmeḥ*—verse 29]; the temple had broad and lofty spires [*vistīrṇa-tuṅga-śikharam*] and resembled a mountain [*śikhari-prakāśam*]. The construction of the temple was completed

22. C II. III. No. 18. pp. 79 f.

in 493 Mālava year [*mālavānāṁ gaṇasthityā yāte śata-catuṣṭaye/ trinavatyadhike' bdānām*—verse 34], i.e., 436 A.D. In course of a long time, under other kings, part of the temple came to a damaging state [*bahunā samatītena kālenānyaiśca pārthivaiḥ/ vyaśīryataikadeśo'sya bhavanasya tato'dhunā//*—verse 36]. The damage was probably caused by an attack on that part of the city by some hostile kings. In the 529 Mālava year (=473 A.D.) which falls within the reign of the later king, Purugupta, the temple was again thoroughly repaired by the same guild [*saṁskāritam idaṁ bhūyaḥ śreṇyā bhānumato gṛham*—verse 37]. After being reconstructed, the temple became "one of the beauties of the picturesque city, as it were the moon in the beautiful sky or the *kaustubha* blazing on the breast of Śārṅgin" [*śaśineva nabho vimalaṁ kaustubha-maṇineva śārṅgiṇo vakṣaḥ/bhavana-vareṇa tathedaṁ puram akhilam alaṁkṛtam udāram//*—verse 42]. Of the two dates, the second one (i.e 473 A.D.) is, according to Fleet, the year in which this inscription was actually composed and engraved (op. cit, p. 81). At the close of the composition, the poet claims that this eulogy is prepared with great effort. cf. *pūrvā ceyaṁ prayatnena racitā vatsabhaṭṭinā* (verse 44); here the missing word after the adjective *pūrvā* may be assumed as *praśasti*.

This inscription gives a vivid accout of the prosperity of a district of Western India viz. Lāṭa and also that of Daśapura. It is evident that town people of this age lived in affluence. This inscription also informs us of the boundaries of Kumāragupta's reign in about 436 A.D. The empire is called by the name *pṛthivī* (verse 23). We learn from this inscription that at the time when Kumāragupta was ruling over the whole earth (i.e India), *Pṛthivī* had 'her swinging *mekhalā* formed by the rolling

four oceans' ; her breasts were the two high mountains, namely, Sumeru and Kailāsa ; and her laughing face was in the form of flowers fully blown in the forests. cf.

catus samudrānta-vilola-mekhalāṁ
sumeru-kailāsa-bṛhat-payodharām/
vanānta-vānta-sphuṭa-puṣpa-hāsinīṁ
kumāragupte pṛthivīṁ praśāsati// (verse-23).

The significance of this verse, according to Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, is that the Sumeru and Kailāsa mountains formed the northern boundaries of the empire, the Vindhya forests [*vanānta*] its southern limits and the seas were the boundaries of the other two sides. (The Gupta Empire, p. 72). If the description of this inscription is considered to be genuine, we must admit that in 436 A.D., Kumāragupta I was at the zenith of his power and fortunes and he organised the administration of the largest Gupta empire.

From the perspective of poetic merits, this inscription stands next to the Allahabad pillar inscription. But while the Allahabad inscription is a mixed composition, this one is completely in verse. It is a poetical master-piece, originated in the hand of a humble but gifted local poet who was not a court-poet of any king, but who most probably used to earn fees by writing poetry. Vatsabhaṭṭi says that this inscription is composed by the order of the guild [*śreṇyādeśena*]. There are innumerable signs of the fact that this work was written with special care [*prayatna*]. When compared with earlier inscriptions, it enlightens us about the comparatively developed stage of Sanskrit artificial poetry. The poet shows his proficiency in versification and illustrates twelve popular metres, viz, *śārdūlavikrīḍita*, *vasantatilakā*, *āryā*, *upendravajrā*, *upajāti*, *drutavilambita*,

hariṇī, indravajrā, mālinī, vaṁśasthavila, mandākrāntā and *anuṣṭubh*. The poet has often tried to beautify his composition with some essential epic attributes ; it includes short descriptions of the cities like Lāṭa and Daśapura, of rivers and mountains and of the dewy and winter seasons.

The following verses, delineating the personality of king Viśvavarman and of his son Bandhuvarman (who were the feudatory or local kings of Daśapura), are meticulously made to be good poems.

samānadhīś śukra-bṛhaspatibhyāṁ
lalāmabhūto bhuvi pārthivānām ।
raṇeṣu yaḥ pārtha-samānakarmmā
babhūva goptā nṛpa-viśvavarmmā ॥

dīnānukampana-paraḥ kṛpaṇārtta-vargga-
sandhāprado' dhikadayālur anātha-nāthaḥ ।
kalpadrumaḥ praṇayinām abhaya-pradaśca
bhītasya yo janapadasya bandhur āsīt ॥

tasyātmajaḥ sthairyya-nayopapanno
bandhu-priyo bandhur iva prajānām ।
bandhvartti-karttā nṛpa-bandhuvarmmā
dviḍ-dṛpta-pakṣa-kṣapaṇaika-dakṣaḥ ॥

kānto yuvā raṇa-paṭur vinayānvitaśca
rājāpi san nupasṛto na madaiḥ smayādyaiḥ ।
śṛṅgāra-mūrttir abhibhātyanalaṁkṛto'pi
rūpeṇa yaḥ kusuma-cāpa iva dvitīyaḥ ॥ (verses 24-27)

In these verses, true estimation of both father and son has been briefly but efficiently presented. In the description of the city of Daśapura also, the poet has attempted his best to show his poetic skill, but in this respect Vatsabhaṭṭi's composition

sometimes appears to be a poor imitation of that of Kālidāsa. Thus the verse—

calat-patākānyabalā-sanāthā-
nyatyarttha-śuklānyadhikonnatāni ।
taḍillatā-citra-sitābhra-kūṭa-
tulyopamānāni gṛhāni yatra ॥ (verse 10)

—inspires us to assume that Vatsabhaṭṭi has perhaps utilised the stanza of Kālidāsa's Meghadūta—*vidyutvantaṁ lalitavanitāḥ sendracāpaṁ sacitrāḥ*, etc. (Uttara Megha, verse-I). When the poet writes—*sumeru-kailāsa-bṛhat-payodharām* (verse 23), he, perhaps, remembers Kālidāsa's idea contained in—*stanāviva diśas tasyāḥ śailau malayadardurau* (Raghu 4. 51). Verse 31 of this inscription gives a picture of the season known as *hemanta*. This verse expresses that during this season men are united with their beloved [*rāmā-sanātharacane*]; light rays of the sun and the fire-heat are agreeable [*dara-bhāskarāṁśu-vahni-pratāpasubhage*]; fishes remain down in the water [*jala-līna-mīne*] and people become averse to the enjoyment of moon-beams, flat-roofs, sandal-paste, plam-leaf-fans and necklaces [*candrāṁśuharmya-tala-candana-tāla-vṛnta-hāropabhoga-rahite*]. In both words and throughts, this verse agrees very much with Kālidāsa's verses on winter in the Ṛtusaṁhāra (5. 2-3). Again, in connection with the description of the *hemanta*, when Kālidāsa writes the pleasing verse—*pīnastanoraḥsthalabhāgaśobhāmāsādya*, etc. (Ṛ*tu*. 4.7), Vatsabhaṭṭi reproduces almost the same idea in the verse—*smara - vaśaga - taruṇajana - vallabhāṅganā-vipula-kānta-pīnoru-/stana-jaghana-ghanāliṅgana - nirbhartsita - tuhina - hima-pāte //* (verse 33). This verse is composed of only one compound word and shows the laboured skill of "a second or third rate poet." (Dr. Sircar—op. cit., p. 305, f. n. 5). This type of composition which shows more of labour than of poetic skill

and which testifies to the poet's love for long compounds in verse, is to be considered as the instance of the *Gauḍī rīti*. This is justified by Vāmana's definition of the *Gauḍī rīti* in his *Kāvyālaṅkārasūtravṛtti* (Adhikarana 1, ch. 2)—

samastāty utkaṭapadām ojaḥkāntiguṇānvitām ।
gauḍīyām iti gāyanti rītiṁ rītiviśāradāḥ ॥

The inscription contains some verses ornamented with alliterations, similes, metaphors and *svabhāvokti*. The lines—*raṇeṣu yaḥ pārthasamānakarmmā/babhūva goptā nṛpaviśvavarmmā//* (verse 24)—create pleasant sound effect. The expressions like—*te deśa-pārthiva-guṇāpahṛtāḥ* (verse 5), *bhūmeḥ parantilakabhūtam idam (daśapuram)* (verse 6), *gṛhāṇi-pūrṇendukarāmalāni* (verse 12), *bandhupriyo bandhur iva prajānām* (verse 26), *rupeṇa yaḥ kusumacāpa iva dvitīyaḥ* (verse 27), etc. are worthy of drawing appreciation from those who are endued with good taste. Such expressions occur abundantly in the extant Sanskrit Kāvyas also.

While Vatsabhaṭṭi has the efficiency in writing charming verse, the harsh sound in the line—*dviḍ dṛpta-pakṣa-kṣapaṇaika-dakṣaḥ* (verse 26) impedes the natural movement of the style. Moreover, there are some other defective features in the poem, such as, the tautology in *tulyopamānāni* (verse 10), needless prefixes in *pra-vi-jṛmbhita* (verse 15) and *abhivibhāti* (verse 19), unnecessary particles in *tatastu* (verse 22), use of the expression —*nabhaḥ spṛśanniva* as an adjective of the neuter *gṛham* (verse 38) and so on. Verses 33 and 39 which are in *āryā* metre, are defective with *yatibhaṅga*.

But irrespective of these flaws, we will have to admit that this *praśasti* is a bright star in the galaxy of Sanskrit inscriptions. While the whole inscription is taken into consideration, it is

needless to prove that it is a valuable document of widespread cultivation of Sanskrit poetry towards the close of the fifth century A.D.

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Two Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscriptions of the time of Kumāragupta I, dated 443 A.D. and 447 A.D., are in prose; the first concludes with a verse and the second with two verses all being composed in *anuṣṭubh* metre. These Bengal inscriptions are of great importance, for, they contain concrete details relating to land-transactions and they throw considerable light on the village administration. The first copper-plate inscription (Select Inscriptions, p. 290) records the sale of land by the Government to a Brāhmaṇa, Karppaṭika by name, to help him in the service regarding the maintenance of sacred fire [*agnihotropayogāya*]. The land was untilted, unreclaimed and unsettled property [*apradāprahata-khila-kṣetram*]; this land, measuring about one *kulyavāpa*, was in the north-western side of the locality, known as Doṅgā [*doṅgāyā uttarapaścimoddeśe kulyavāpam ekaṁ dattam*—line 11]. After proper recommendations by the record-keepers [*pusta-pāla*], namely, Ṛṣidatta, Jayanandī and Vibhudatta, the land was sold for three *dīnāra-s* [*trīṇi dīnārāṇyupasaṁgṛhya*].

The second Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscription (Select Ins. p. 292) records the sale of land by the Government to a Brāhamaṇa for proper institution of the five daily sacrifices [*pañcamahāyajñapravartanāya*]. The land was of five *droṇa-s* [*pañcadroṇātmakāḥ*] and the Brāhmin was also endowed with "the right of using the canals excavated for watering the field" [*haṭṭapānakaiśca saha dattāḥ*—line 10]. The names of the record-keepers are the same as in the first plate.

These two inscriptions supply us with some interesting details about the local administration during the Gupta period. We know from these inscriptions that sale or transfer of land was on the basis of *nīvī-dharma* (1st plate, line 9) or *apradākṣya-nīvī-maryādā* (2nd plate, line 6). The term *nīvī-dharma* has been explained by Dr. Mukherjee as "the condition that the public purpose, charitable or religious, for which the grant was sanctioned was to be permanently promoted out of the income from the land granted, so that the land could not be transferred or alienated in any way for profit and should not change hands as private property." (Gupta Empire, p. 83). Land-sale was made when the record-keepers, to whom a petition for purchase of land was made earlier [*etat vijñāpyam upalabhya*, 2nd plate, line-7], after going through the records, declared that the land might be sold [*evaṁ dīyatām iti*—1st plate, line-9].

According to these inscriptions, Puṇḍravardhana (which has been identified as the Bogrā-Rājasāhi-Dinājpur region of North Bengal) was one of the provinces (*bhukti*) of the Gupta empire. Koṭivarṣa (="Devīkoṭa in the present *Dinājpur district*") was one of the districts (*viṣaya*) of Puṇḍravardhana. Pundravardhana was ruled by Cirātadatta who was a provincial Governor (*uparika*). The provincial Governor appointed the district adminitrator, as we are told that Cirātadatta selected Kumārāmātya Vetravarmā as the administrator of Koṭivarsa [*koṭivarṣaviṣaye ca tanniyukta-kumārāmātya-vetravarmaṇi*—1st plate, line 3-4; 2nd plate, line 3]. *Adhiṣṭhāna* was the name of the district headquarters and the district office of administration was called *Adhiṣṭhānādhikaraṇa* (1st plate, line 4). The district magistrate was helped in his administration [*puroge saṁvyavaharati*—1st

plate, line 6] by an Advisory Board consisting of four non-official members "representing the different interests of the locality", viz.—(1) *Nagara-śreṣṭhī*, 'President of the Town Corporation (Mayor)', (2) *Sārtha-vāha*, representative of the merchant community, (3) *Prathama-kulika*, the chief of the artisan class, and (4) *Prathama-kāyastha*, the chief of the union of writers who possibly acted as the secretary of the Board. The above description may generally mean the Rural Board. The records give us the impression that they point to "the association of popular representatives with the district as well as town and village administration." These inscriptions show that many modern elements of rural self-government were present during the time of the Guptas. The Advisory Board, as prevailing in that era, was very much in line with the Zilā Pariṣat of the Pañcāyeti Rāj of Independant India. Dr. Sircar maintains that the Board referred to in the Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscriptions, "seems to have worked like the West Indian Chauthiā (Chaturjātaka) of which the chairman is the Nagar-seth (Nagara-śreṣṭhin) and the Paṭel (village headman) and Paṭwari (accountant-scribe=*kāyastha*) are members." (op cit, p. 291, f. n. 8).

From literary point of view, both these inscriptions are not much worthy of notice. The most remarkable aspect of these inscriptions is that the prose portion makes only one sentence which extends upto the eleventh line. The longest compound includes nine words (1st plate, lines 4-6). The language of these two inscriptions is almost similar. As regards orthography, Prākṛt influence is prominently noticeable, such as *riśidatta* (in place of *ṛṣidatta*), *krimiḥ* (in place of *kṛmiḥ*), *pitribhiḥ* (in place of *pitṛbhiḥ*) and so on. It is interesting to note that these spellings are in great affinity with the system of pro-

nounciation of the people of Bengal. Rules of Sandhi are occasionally violated, as in *vijñāpitaṁ arhata* (2nd plate line 6), *sahiteti* (line 10), etc. The concluding verses of both these inscriptions are not composed by the author himself, but quoted from the Mahābhārata. The verses have been introduced by the expression—*api ca bhūmidānasambandhāvimau ślokau bhavataḥ* (1st plate, line 11 and also 2nd plate, line 11).

* * * *

The Baigrām (Bagurā) copper-plate inscription, dated the Gupta year 128 (=447 A.D.), is another important Bengal inscription[23]. Though its literary character is not so remarkable, it gives, in twenty five lines, some interesting administrative data which were in vogue during the reign of Kumāragupta I. Hence, it has been included in our study. It is in prose throughout, with three concluding verses quoted from the Mahābhārata. This inscription is absolutely an official record having no scope for poetic embellishments. The verses, dealing with the merit of land-gift, occur also in other inscriptions related with land-grant. They stress on unlawfulness and great sin originating from forceful possession of the sold land. The inscription does not mention the name of the emperor, but Kumāragupta I is referred to in the expression—*bhaṭṭārakapāda* in line 1.

The inscription records that there were two agriculturist householders [*vāstavyakuṭumbi*], named Bhoyila and Bhāskara who were two brothers, residing respectively at Trivṛtā and Gohāli—the localities connected with Vāyigrāma (Baigrām) [*vāyigrāmikatrivṛtāgohālyoḥ*]. They intended to make a gift of land to the temple of Govindasvāmī [*bhagavato govindasvāminaḥ*

23. R. G. Basak—Ep. Ind. Vol. XXI. pp. 81 f; Select Inscriptions, pp. 355 f.

devakulam] which was founded by their father Śivanandī [*pitrā śivanandinā kāritam*, line—3], but which existed with poor resource [*alpa-vṛttikam*]. They wanted to make provision for the repair of the temple which was partly damaged and met with cracks, as well as for the supply of things, needed for worship like seents,.incense, light and flowers [*khaṇḍa-phuṭṭa-pratisaṁskārakaraṇāya gandhadhūpadīpasumanasāṁ pravarttanāya ca*—lines 7-8]. The district office, where they applied for the land, is called *Viṣayādhikaraṇa.* This office was located at Pañcanagarī which seems to be the chief town of the district. The application was sent to the district officer, named Kulavṛddhi who is described as *Kumārāmātya.* In the beginning of the inscription, Kulavṛddhi directly pays homage to the emperor, Kumāragupta, as is indicated by the expression—*bhaṭṭāraka-pādānudhyāta.* This direct homage to the king and not to the immediate superior is, perhaps, because of the reason that the appointment of the district officers was sometimes made by the king himself.

The application was made for purchasing three *kulyavāpa-s* of fallow land [*khilakṣetrakulyavāpatrayam*]. In addition, Bhoyila and Bāskara applied separately for one *droṇavāpa* of homestead land [*sthalavāstuno droṇavāpam ekam*] which was required for the construction of a dwelling site and a garden [*talavāṭakārtham*]. We are informed that two record-keepers [*pustapāla*], Durgadatta and Arkadāsa by name, sanctioned the sale of the land on the basis of *Nīvīdharma* and after having considered the following facts :—(1) that the land did not yield any revenue [*samudayabāhyo*], (2) that it was 'devoid of vegetation and hence uncultivated waste' [*astamba-khila-kṣetra*], (3) that there could be no objection to such sale because the king would have no financial loss, for, the land did not yield any revenue [*evaṁ-*

vidhāpratikara-khila-kṣetra-vikraye ca na kaścid rājārthavirodhaḥ —line 12], (4) that the king would have some material as well as spiritual gain in the form of *dharma* from its sale [*upacaya eva bhaṭṭārakapādānāṁ dharmaphala-ṣaḍbhāgāvāptiśca*—line 13], and (5) that it was located in such a place which had no conflict with the agricultural work of the villagers [*svakarśaṇāvirodhisthāne*]. Land for sale was generally measured out by *darvīkarmahasta* which indicates "a cubit of special length"; boundaries of the plots were marked out from one another by putting down various solid objects like ash, interred coal and the like [*cirakālasthāyi-tuṣāṅgārādīnāṁ-cihnaiś cāturdiśo niyamya*—line 19]

The price, paid for the three *kulyavāpa-s* of *khila* land and two *droṇavāpa-s* of home-stead land, was six *dīnāra-s* and eight silver coins [*ṣad dīnārān aṣṭa ca rūpakān āyīkṛtya*] which possibly indicate the Gupta gold and silver coins.

Several other Bengal inscriptions of the Gupta period give us sufficient information about the details of the village administration as well as about the system of land-transaction.

Of these inscriptions, remarkable are—the Dhānāidaha copper-plate inscription, dated 432 A.D.; Kalaikuri inscription, dated 439 A.D.; Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscription, dated 476 A. D.; Pāhārpur copper-plate inscription, dated 479 A. D. and so on. We are unfortunate enough that as similar types of land-grants, belonging to other places outside Bengal, have not yet satisfactorily been recovered, we do not possess detailed knowledge of the procedure of the local administration in other provinces of the Gupta empire. We may assume that those provinces also possessed administrative structure having partial or complete likeness to the constitution of the Municipal Boad in Bengal. The Bengal inscriptions, however, stand in sharp contrast to those found in other provinces, so far as administrative docu-

ments are concerned. The procurement of important records in these inscriptions speaks of a well-knit urban construction of the administrative offices and of the systems of land-transaction in the Bengal region during the era of the Guptas. The Baigrām inscription shows that Vaiṣṇavism, the favourite religion of the Gupta monarchs, entered the masses of Bengal by the middle of the 5th cenrury A.D., and shrines of Viṣṇu, under different names (such as, god Govindasvāmin in this inscription), were constructed at various parts of this province.

* * * *

The Sāñcī stone inscription, dated 450 A.D., is of Buddhistic character (CII. III. No. 62, pp. 261 f.). It does not directly refer to the regin of any king, but the date, recorded here, ascribes it to the later part of Kumāragupta I's reign. It records the gift of certain sums of money, by Upāsikā Harisvāminī, wife of Upāsaka Sanasiddha, to the *Āryasaṁgha* (Buddhīst community) of Kākanādaboṭa (i.e. the great *stūpa* at Sāṇcī). It is reported that this gift was made in memory of her parents [*mātāpitaram uddiśya*]. The gift consisted of (1) twelve *dīnāra-s* [*dīnārā dvādaśa*] with the interest of which [*eṣāṁ dīnārāṇāṁ yā vṛddhiḥ*] one Bhikṣu, who had been newly introduced into the community [*saṁgha-madhya-proviṣṭaka*], should be fed daily; (2) three *dīnāra-s* in the jewel-house [*ratnagṛhe'pi dīnāratrayaṁ dattaṁ*] to make provision, out of the interest of the fund, for lightening three lamps; (3) one *dīnāra*, in the place where the images of four Buddhas were seated [*caturbuddhāsane'pi dattaḥ dīnāra ekaḥ*], for the purpose of maintaining lamp-light in front of each of the images, out of the interest of the fund. These gifts were meant for permanent endowment [*akṣayanīvī*]—keeping the sum intact and spending only the interests. Here also we find the operation of the Banking system. This inscription

does not say anything about the source of Harisvāminī's earning the money. It is possible that she made the donation out of her own *strīdhana*. This gift, made by a woman, points to the woman's right to her property which has been highly recognised by Kātyāyana and other Smṛti-writers. We can learn from this inscription and from other records also that women belonging to respectable families, who generally remained under the care of their husbands, were free to spend the money, received from their parents as a dowry or from any other source, according to their own wishes.

This inscription, like many other Buddist inscriptions, is entirely in prose. In comparison to the earlier Sāñcī inscription of Candragupta II's times, dated 412 A.D., the present one retains lucidity in language ; its compound words are shorter than those in the earlier one and they display the author's sense of proportion, Grammatical flaws are few here [an example is —*mātāpitaram uddiśya*, the correct form being—*mātāpitarāvuddiśya*]. Though this epigraphical piece was obviously brought forth by a mature poet, its style distinctly exhibits loose behaviour, because of its total indifference to '*Sandhi*'. In several cases, the words are disjoined. A Sanskrit prose work is bound to meet with failure if the author is negligent of compact arrangement of words and if he is unconscious of proper utilisation of Sandhi and Samāsa ; the author of the present inscription is, to some extent, guilty of both of these faults.

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The Bhitarī stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta, dated 455-467 A.D.,[24] supplies us with valuable information in respect of some important documents of Skandagupta's reign. At the

24. CII. III. No. 13, pp. 53 f.

same time, it is also remarkable for poetic value. It consists of six prose lines in the beginning and thereafter twelve verses depicting Skandagupta's career as a crown-prince and also as a king. In the prose lines, Skandagupta's genealogy is narrated. In the genealogical list, Samudragupta, the great grand-father of Skandagupta, is described as the exterminator of all hostile kings [*sarvarājocchettuḥ*] and as the restorer of the *Aśvamedha*-sacrifice that had been long in abeyance [*cirotsannāśvamedhāharttuḥ*]. That Samudragupta celebrated his *digvijaya* by performing the horse-sacrifice is established by this inscription. In this connection, it may be noted that the Allahabad pillar inscription which says so much of Samudragupta's variegated performances is absolutely silent regarding the horse-sacrifice which happened to be the most memorable incident of his time. The reasonable justification for this silence may be that the ceremony was performed after the Allahabad inscription had been incised. Samudragupta's performance of the horse-sacrifice may also be supported by his Aśvamedha-type of gold coins. These coins portary the horse before a sacrificial post [*yūpa*] and contain the legend—*rājādhirājaḥ pṛthivīm avitvā divaṁ jayatyaprativāryavīryaḥ* /. On the other side of these coins, Samudragupta's queen Dattadevī, wearing loose robe and jewellery, is portrayed and there the legend is—*aśvamedha-parākramaḥ*. Thus, it appears that Samudragupta's conquests were followed by the performance of the horse-sacrifice. *Aśvamedha* was regarded as a great *dharma* with the help of which, it was believed, one could conquer even the heaven. In this connection it may be pointed out that Kumāragupta I also performed the horse-sacrifice, as is indicated by the issue of the Aśvamedha type of gold coins bearing on one side the legend *jayati divaṁ Kūmāraḥ* (Kumāragupta has conquered the heaven) and on the

other—*śrī-aśvamedhamahendraḥ*. It is apparent that the horse-sacrifice was performed by the monarchs after they had achieved considerable conquests over the enemies.

The Bhitarī inscription informs us of the fact that Skanda-gupta succeeded his father, for, he was the most worthy of all the princes and he extended his whole-hearted loyalty to his father [*pitṛ-parigata-pāda-padma-vartī/prathita-yaśāḥ pṛthivī-patiḥ suto'yam //*—verse I]. As a crown-prince, Skandagupta was 'the most prominent hero in the lineage of the Guptas' [*guptavaṁ-śaikavīraḥ*] and he subdued and executed his enemies when the latter marched forward with the intention of conquering the Gupta territory [cf. *svabhumata-vijigīṣā-prodyatānāṁ pareṣāṁ / praṇihita iva lebhe saṁvidhānopadeśaḥ //*—verse 3]. He restored the glory of the Gupta family which was, for the time being, shaken by the enemies [*vicalita-kula-lakṣmī-stambhanāyodyatena*—verse 4]; he conquered the Puṣyamitras, probably a tribe allied to the Hūnas, who had accumulated great power and wealth [*samudita-balakośān puṣyamitrāṁśca jitvā*—verse 4]. These events possibly signify the historical facts that during the close of Kumāragupta I's reign, hordes of foreign enemies invaded India and consequently the peace of the Gupta empire was threatened; but Skandagupta's heroic energy and military genius ultimately saved the situation. Skandagupta's battle was so tremendous that he had to spend a whole night on the bare ground [*kṣiti-tala-śayanīye yena nītā triyāmā*—verse 4]. We are further told that songs glorifying Skandagupta's activities were sung in all directions by men of all ages [*caritam amalakīrtter gīyate yasya śubhraṁ / diśi diśi parituṣṭair ākumāraṁ manuṣyaiḥ //*—verse 5].

In verse 6, it is said that after his father died [*pitari divam upete*], when the Gupta fortune was again unsettled

[*viplutāṁ vaṁśa-lakṣīm*], he reinstated it by conquering the enemies with the help of his own arms [*bhuja-bala-vijitārir yaḥ pratiṣṭhāpya bhūyaḥ*] and reported this incident to his mother, as Kṛṣṇa reported his victories to his mother Devakī [*hataripur iva kṛṣṇo mātaram abhyupetaḥ*]. This event indicates that before Skandagupta actually seized the royal power, the throne was probably captured by one of his rivals and Skandagupta was successful in retaliating upon him. This rival was probably Purugupta, his half-brother.

Having thus re-established the tottering Gupta fortune, Skandagupta extended the limits of his empire by fresh conquests ; he showed generosity, like his predecessor Samudragupta, to the conquered kings in distress [*vaṁśaṁ pratiṣṭhāpya yo bāhubhyām avaniṁ vijitya hi jiteṣvārtteṣu kṛtvā dayām*—verse 7]. The most notable incident of Skandagupta's reign was his war with the Hūṇas ; it is stated that the earth was shaken by him, while in close conflict with the mighty Hūṇas [*hūṇair yasya samāgatasya samare dorbhyāṁ dharā kampitā*—verse 8].

At the close, the inscription records the installation of an image of God Viṣṇu [*bhagavato mūrttiḥ*] under the name of Śārṅgin and the allotment of a village to that image for the sake of the religious merit of Kumāragupta I [*grāmam enaṁ sa vidadhe pituḥ puṇyābhivṛddhaye*—verse 11]. This shows Skandagupta's fidelity to his father whom he held in deep reverence. This inscription establishes that like his father and grandfather, Skandagupta also was a devout Vaiṣṇava. The inscription says that Skandagupta "made the image of Viṣṇu and installed it under the name of Sārṅgin" and it was

erected in such a way that it might endure as long as the moon and the stars exist.—

karttavyā pratimā kācit pratimāṁ tasya śārṅgiṇaḥ/
supratītaścakāremāṁ yāvad ācandratārakam//—(verse 10).

It appears from this verse that Skandagupta installed the image of Viṣṇu and also built a temple for the deity and made over the village (in which the stone column stands) to the image for its maintenance.[25]

The prose lines of this inscription, containing the genealogical list, are common with those of several other inscriptions, but the verses are the poet's own creation. Metres used for the verses are *puṣpitāgrā*, *mālinī*, *śārdūlavikrīḍita*, and *anuṣṭubh*; the verses are free from lengthy and complicated words. There are several instances of the poet's fondness of using alliteration, such as,—

prathita-pṛthumati-svabhāva-śakteḥ/pṛthu-yaśasaḥ pṛthivī-pateḥ pṛthu-śrīḥ/pitṛ-parigata-pāda-padma-varttī/prathita-yaśāḥ pṛthivī-patiḥ suto' yam// (verse 1): *sucarita-caritānāṁ yena vṛttena vṛttam* (verse 2); *pituḥ puṇyāya puṇyadhīr iti* (verse 12) and so on.

The poet's fascination for metaphor is to be noticed in the expressions like—*kṣiti-tala-śayanīye yena nītā triyāmā* and *kṣitipa-caraṇapīṭhe sthāpito vāmapādaḥ* (verse 4). When in the sentence—*caritam amalakīrtter gīyate yasya śubhram* (verse 5), the poet appropriately attributes *śubhram* to *caritam*, he behaves like an innate poet and, perhaps, remembers the poetic convention, recorded later in the Sāhityadarpaṇa (VII. 19) thus—*yaśasi dhavalatā varṇyate hāsa-kīrttyoḥ.* Verse 6 contains

25. Prof. K. G. Goswami—A Study of Vaiṣṇavism, p. 22.

description relating to Skandagupta's conquests over his rivals and herein his comparison to Kṛṣṇa [*hataripur iva kṛṣṇaḥ*] is a good sample of simile. As an example of *virodhābhāsa,* we may cite the line—*notsikto na ca vismitaḥ pratidinaṁ saṁvardhamānadyutiḥ* (verse 7). When the poet narrates that the sound of Skandagupta's approaching arrows on the enemies is, as it were, the roaring of the river Gaṅgā [*lakṣyata iva śrotreṣu gāṅgadhvaniḥ*—verse 8], we can instantly recognise it as an appropriate illustration of *utprekṣā.*

Considering all these facts, it may be concluded that in this inscription there are the poet's sincere efforts to show an advancement as well as refinement towards poetic perfection; but at the same time we must admit that the poet lacks the requisite descriptive power, because, this inscription does not give a complete picture of any person or object. Samudragupta's battle with the Hūṇas (verse 8) was, perhps, poetised in *raudra* sentiment, but unfortunately this portion is badly damaged. Ungrammatical forms, irregularities in Sandhi and spellings are lesser and insignificant here.

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The Junāgaḍh rock inscription of Skandagupta[26] is a lengthy one, composed in verse, and is divided into two parts; the first is described as a *granṭha* dealing with the restoration of the Sudarśana lake, as is stated in the concluding line—*iti sudarśanataṭākasaṁskāra-grantharacanā samāptā.* The first part consists of thirty-nine verses and the second of eight verses most of which are in dilapidated condition. This inscription is evidently a Vaiṣṇava record. It opens with an invocation to God Viṣṇu [cf. *sa jayati vijitārttir viṣṇur atyanta-jiṣṇuḥ*—

26. C 11. III. No. 14. pp. 58 f.

verse 1]. Six verses (2-7) are devoted to the kingly qualities of Skandagupta ; he is said to have developed heroism by the strength of his arms [*svabhujajanitavirya*] and made himself the abode of all the royal merits [*nṛpatigunaniketaḥ*].

Skandagupta marched against the hostile kings who resembled "so many serpants lifting up their hoods in pride and arrogance" ; he utilised "the authority of his local representatives like so many Garuḍas" [*narapati-bhujagānāṁ mānadarpot-phaṇānāṁ pratikṛti-garuḍājñāṁ nirvviṣīṁ cāvakarttā*—verse 2]. When his father died, he "bowed down his enemies, and made subject to himself the whole earth" [*avanim avanatārir yaḥ cakārātmasaṁsthāṁ pitari surasakhitvam prāptavatyātma-śaktyā*—verse 3]. His enemies in the countries of the Mlecchas, after their 'pride broken down to the very root', announced the words—"verily the victory has been achieved by him" [*āpa ca jitam eva tena prathayanti yaśāṁsi yasya ripavo'pi / āmula-bhagna-darpā......mleccha-deśesu //*—verse 4]. We are not certain as to who these Mlecchas were, but they might indicate the hordes of the Hūṇas who probably advanced against central India about the close of Kumāragupta I's reign.

Skandagupta was selected for the throne by the Goddess of Fortune of her own accord, having discarded all other princes and after having fully taken into consideration all the causes of virtues and vices [*krameṇa buddhyā nipuṇam pradhārya dhyātvā ca kṛtsnān guṇadoṣahetūn / vyapetya sarvān manujendraputrān lakṣmīḥ svayaṁ yaṁ varayāñcakāra //*—verse—5]. This description may suggest that after the death of Kumāragupta I, the Gupta princes had been engaged in struggle for the throne and Skandagupta was successful in retaining it for himself. That Skandagupta was an able ruler is evidenced by the statement that when he was ruling over his vast empire [*tasmin nṛpe śāsati*],

none of his subjects deviated from religion [*naiva kaścid dharmād apeto manujaḥ prajāsu*—verse—6], none "was distressed or in poverty, or in misery, or avaricious". (versc 6). Here lies a picture of the peaceful atmosphere of the country.

Having conquered the whole earth and having tarnished the pride of his enemies, Skandagupta "set about organizing his empire by appointing Governors in all the Provinces." [*evaṁ sa jitvā pṛthivīṁ samagrāṁ bhagnāgradarpān dviṣataśca kṛtvā/sarveṣu deśeṣu vidhāya goptṛn*—verse—7]. The king then cogitated in many ways [*saṁcintayāmāsa bahu-prakāram*] to find out from among his officers [*sarveṣu bhṛtyesvapi saṁhatesu*] the most suitable and competent one who could bear the burden [*bhārasya udvahane samarthaḥ*] of governing the whole of the Surāṣṭra countries [*yo me praśiṣyān nikhilān surāṣṭrān*]. The king's cogitation about the selection of an efficient Governor is delineated in verses 8-10. He was in search of a person who would be suitable [*anurūpa*]; intellectual [*matimān*]; modest [*vinīta*]; 'possessed of a disposition that is not destitute of wisdom and memory' [*medhā-smṛtibhyām anapeta-bhāvaḥ*]; 'endowed with truth, straightforwardness, nobility and prudent behaviour' [*satyārjavaudāryanayopapannaḥ*]; associated with manly characteristics [*nṛviśeṣayuktaḥ*]; possessed of pure mind [*viśuddhabuddhi*] and so on. At last, an officer, Parṇadatta by name, appeared to be a competent person to shoulder the burden of responsibility [*āṁ jñātam ekaḥ khalu parṇadatto bhārasya tasyodvahane samarthaḥ*—verse 11]. Before Parṇadatta was appointed to rule over the Surāṣṭra region [*samyak-surāṣṭrāvani-pālanāya*], the king had gone on deliberating for many a day and night [*evaṁ viniścitya nṛpādhipena naikān aho-rātra-gaṇān sva-matyā*—verse 12]. The king, at last, was easy at heart when he ultimately discovered in Parṇadatta the capability of ruling the western part of the country, just as, the gods became

satisfied and undisturbed in their mind when they had selected Varuna as the guardian of 'the western point of the compass'. cf.—

niyujya devā varuṇaṁ pratīcyāṁ
svasthā yathā nonmanaso babhūvuḥ/
pūrvvetarasyām diśi parṇadattaṁ
niyujya rājā dhṛtimāṁstathābhūt//—(verse 13)

Skandagupta's deep deliberation over the appointment of a powerful Governor for the western Gupta province, Saurāṣṭra, was, perhaps, due to the trouble, emanating from the *Hūṇa* inroads in that region. Starting from the closing days of the reign of Kumāragupta I, the Gupta empire had to face a number of mighty enemies, among whom the Puṣyamitras have already been referred to. The *Hūṇa* menace was mainly felt in the western part of the country, and for the protection of this region, Skandagupta arranged, by appointing an efficient Governor, precautionary measures to resist the Hūṇa inroad.

'Parnadatta, on his part, was hard put to it to find a fit administrator for the capital of that troubled province'. He then chose his son, Cakrapālita, after testing in person his qualities [*guṇān parīkṣya svayam eva pitrā*] as the protector (Mayor) of the city, named Girināgā [*yaḥ saṁniyukta nagarasya rakṣām*—verse 20]; in regard to the administration of this city, Cakrapālita distinguished himself as an expert ruler and surpassed, in this respect, even his predecessors [*viśiṣya pūrvān pracakāra 'samyak*—verse 20]. Six verses are concerned with some of the most salient features of Cakrapālita's municipal administration. What is said about Cakrapālita in this inscription, may be singled out as essential administrative characteristics that make a proficient and successful administrator of a city. A Mayor must possess the following qualities—

"patience ; lordship ; modesty ; good behaviour ; heroism without too great an estimation of prowess; eloquence; self-control; liberality ; high-spiritedness ; civility ; the acquittance of debts and obligations ; freedom from empty-headedness ; etc." cf.—

kṣamā prabhutvaṁ vinayo nayaśca
śauryaṁ vinā śaurya-mahārccanaṁ ca /
vākyaṁ damo danām adīnatā ca
dākṣiṇyam ānṛṇyam aśūnyatā ca // (verse 17)

Cakrapālita is said to have subjected no one in his city to anxiety and duly punished the wicked persons [*nodvejayāmāsa ca kaṁcid evam asmin pure caiva śasāsa duṣṭān*—verse 21]. He made his subjects delighted by cheerful conversations, by showing marks of honour and by giving presentatios [*saṁraṁjayāṁ ca prakṛtīr babhūva/pūrvva-smitābhāṣaṇa-māna-dānaiḥ*/ verse-23]. He further possessed the most useful habit of making social calls on his fellow citizens, by paying visits to their houses in a free and unceremonious manner; in addition to these, his popularity became wide-spread when he used to hold receptions at his own residence [*niryantraṇānyonya-gṛha-praveśaiḥ / saṁvarddhita-prīti-gṛhopacāraiḥ* //—verse 23]. These lines indicate that Mayor Cakrapālita always tried to retain his exceptionally bright image among his subjects and to infuse fresh strength and confidence in the mind of the people of the city.

Cakrapālita's competency in the field of administration was soon put to a severe test. During the rainy season [*atha kramenāmbudakāla āgate*], owing to excessive rains [*vavarṣa toyaṁ bahu santataṁ ciram*], the lake Sudarśana, which served the city, suddenly burst [*sudarśanaṁ yena bibheda cātvarāt*—verse 26] in the Gupta year 136=455 A.D. [*saṁvatsarāṇām adhike śate tu triṁśadbhir anyair api ṣaḍbhir eva* / verse-27]. This lake, having the appearance of an ocean [*ambhonidhitulyadarśanam*], being

drained of its waters, assumed an unpleasant sight [*durdarśanatāṁ gataṁ*]. The citizens were then overtaken by great despair [*viṣādyamānāḥ khalu sarvato janāḥ*—verse 30] and were at their wit's end as to decide how they should act [*kathaṁ-kathaṁ kāryam iti pravādinaḥ*—verse 30]. At last Cakrapālita, for the welfare of the king and of the city [*rājño hitārthaṁ nagarasya caiva*—verse 32], reconstructed the breach and built the embankment in a new way by an immeasurable expenditure of wealth [*dhanasya kṛtvā vyayam aprameyam*—verse 35] within an incredibly short period of only two months [*māsa-dvayena*]. The embankment is said to be a hundred cubits in length [*āyāmato hasta-śataṁ samagram*], sixty-eight cubits in breadth [*vistārataḥ ṣaṣṭir athāpi cāṣṭau*—verse 36] and seven men's height in elevation ; it was a laboriously built-up masonry work [*samyak-ghaṭitopalena*] and was constructed in such a way as it might last for all time [*śāśvatakalpa-kālam*].

This Sudarśana lake had a past history. From Junāgaḍh inscription of Rudradāman I, dated 150 A.D. (Select inscriptions, pp. 175 f.) we came to know that this "lake was originally constructed in the reign of Candragupta Maurya by building an embankment across a small gap in a natural dipression on the hill". The lake served the irrigation purpose. In this lake, the rain water was collected and it was sent by irrigation channels to distant lands and thus helped fertilisation. The embankment of this lake burst and was repaired by the Śaka king, Rudradāman I, in 150 A.D. After about three hundred years, during the Gupta rule, the lake met with the same misfortune and was repaired by Cakrapālita as is recorded in this inscription. This testifies to the great importance of this lake in the Saurāṣṭra region, and at the same time, to the great care undertaken for irrigation in ancient India. This inscription

is also a pointer to the outstanding engineering works taken up during the period of the Guptas.

The sccond part of this inscription, broken in many places, records the construction of the temple of God Viṣṇu under the name, Cakrabhṛt by Cakrapālita [*kāritam avakramatinā cakrabhṛtaḥ cakrapālitena gṛham*—verse 45]. That Cakrapālita was a devout Vaiṣṇava is ensured by the expression that his life was dedicated to the feet of Govinda [*govinda-pādārpita-jīvitena*]. We are informed of the fact that the construction of the temple took a long time and a great expenditure of wealth [*arthavyayena mahatā mahatā ca kālena*—verse 43] : it appears that the temple was of an amazing size and it drew the attention of the people by its magnificience [*ātma-prabhāva-nata-paurajanena tena*]. This inscription makes it certain that Vaiṣṇavism had achieved a lofty position in the western part of India during the time of Skandagupta. Moreover, records of this type prove that the Gupta kings were not silent Vaiṣṇavas, but they also went on propagating the cause of Vaiṣṇavism through some of their responsible officials who embraced Vaiṣṇavism and erected temples and therein the images of Viṣṇu, under various names were installed.

In this inscription, there are altogether forty-seven verses and the metres, used here, are *mālinī, āryā, upajāti, indravajrā, ardhasamamālabhāriṇī* (verse-16), *vaṁśastha* and *vasantatilakā*. This work was written a few years before the composition of the Mandasor inscription of Vatsabhaṭṭi. While Vatsabhaṭṭi's *praśasti* does concern with the descriptions, mainly, of the cities, oceans, mountains, seasons, etc., the present inscription favours to delineate the subtle characteristics of human mind. Of course, the picture of the Sudarśana lake cannot be undervalued with apathetic outlook. It must be admitted that the inscription, as a whole, is not a good poetic creation, but there are some

expressions which are akin to those of an efficient poet. We find a fine illustration of *rūpaka*, when Skandagupta's enemies are compared to serpants lifting up their hoods in pride and arrogance. cf. *narapati-bhujagānāṁ māna-darpotphaṇānām* (verse 2). When the poet narrates that after his father had acquired the friendship of the gods (i.e. after his death), Skandagupta "bowed down his enemies and made subject to himself the whole earth, bounded by the waters of the four oceans and full of thriving countries round the borders of it" (verse 3), we can distinguish this verse as an apt illustration of *atiśayokti*. The rivers' union with their husband i e. ocean [cf. *samudrakāntāḥ cirabandhanojjhitāḥ punah patiṁ śāstra-yathocitaṁ yayuḥ* // verse 28] is an excellent instance of *samāsokti*. Again, a good example of *virodhābhāsa* is traceable in the expression—*apiha loke sakale sudarśanaṁ......durdarśanatāṁ gataṁ kṣaṇāt* (verse 31). The expressions like—*sa jayati vijitārttir viṣṇur atyantajiṣṇuḥ* (verse-1), *lakṣmīḥ svayam yaṁ varayāṁcakāra* (verse-5), *nṛṇāṁ śaraṇyah śaraṇāgatānām* (verse 15). *vavarṣa toyaṁ bahu saṁtataṁ ciram* (verse 26), etc., are certainly evidences of polished poetry and they bear likeness to beautiful poetic expressions invented by poets like Kālidāsa. The grammatical peculiarities in the usages, such as, *saṁramjayāṁ ca prakṛtir babhūva* (verse 23) and *vicintayāṁ cāpi babhūvur utsukāḥ* (verse 30) can also be traced in the works of later classical poets. Again, the verse—

tasyātmajo hyātmajabhāvayukto
dvidheva cātmātmavaśena nītaḥ /
sarvātmanātmeva ca rakṣaṇiyo
nityātmavān ātmajakāntarūpaḥ // (verse-14)

—is a fine illustration of alliteration and this type is not very common even in the renowned inscriptional writings.

This inscription evinces that during the middle of the 5th century A.D., there was a deep inclination towards bringing out lengthy and metrical epigraphical compositions. The style here is *Vaidarbhī*, but that of *Gauḍī* is also detectable. The poet uses harsh sounds like *niryantraṇānyonyagṛhapraveśaih* (verse 23). The harsh and gorgeous words, while applied in a poetry, are designated by Daṇḍin (Kāvyādarśa I. 72) as *dīptaguṇa* which is opposite to *saukumārya*.

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The Eran stone pillar inscription of the time of Budhagupta, dated 484 A.D.,[27] is short but not insignificant from the standpoint of the evaluation of Sanskrit inscriptional prose composition. The inscription refers to the Gupta year 165 when Budhagupta was ruling over the country [*śate pañcaṣaṣṭyadhike varṣāṇāṁ bhūpatau ca budhagupte*—verse 2]. At that time, Mahārāja Suraśmicandra, a feudatory chief of Budhagupta, was administering the country lying between the river Kālindī (or Jamunā) and the Narmadā [*kālindī-narmadayor madhyaṁ pālayati lokapālaguṇaiḥ jagati mahārājaśriyam anubhavati suraśmicandre ca* //—verse 3]. The inscription records the erection of a flag-staff or pillar called *dhvaja-stambha* of god Viṣṇu, under the name of Janārdana [*janārdanasya dhvaja-stambho' bhyucchritaḥ*—line 9], by Mahārāja Mātṛviṣṇu (a subordinate ruler under Suraśmicandra) and his brother Dhanyaviṣṇu.

This inscription is purely of a Vaiṣṇavaite character. In the beginning, it describes the glory of Viṣṇu who is stated as four-armed, "whose couch is the broad waters of the four oceans, who is the cause of the continuance, production

27 C II. III. No. 19. pp. 89 f.

and destruction, etc. of the universe and whose ensign is Garuda"—*jayati vibhuś caturbhujaś catur arṇṇava-vipula-salila-paryaṅkaḥ / jagataḥ sthityutpatti-nyayādi-hetur garuḍa-ketuḥ //* (verse 1). This epigraphical record contains marks of the devotional cult of Viṣṇu. It is one of the earliest inscriptional evidences of the four-armed Visnu. Mātṛviṣṇu's family had, for the past few generations, the surname *viṣṇu* ; thus, his geart grand-father was Indra-visnu, his grandfather was Varuna-viṣṇu, his father Hariviṣnu and brother Dhanyavisnu. All these names, ending with viṣṇu, make it sure that this family was very much devoted to god Viṣnu, and for several generations it embraced the Vaiṣṇava religion. Mātṛviṣnu has been emphatically described as a devotee of god Visṇu [*atyanta-bhagavadbhaktena*]. So, it appears that like the Gupta kings, their feudatory chiefs also followed a particular religion through successive generations. This inscription also develops the notion that during the close of the fifth century A.D., Vaisnavism was in a very exalted position, even though Buddhism and Jainism simultaneously attracted a lot of people.

This inscription begins with three verses in *āryā* metre, which are followed by nine prose lines. So, it may be considered a *campū* type of composition. The remarkable feature to be noted in this inscription is that the poet has a predilection for using alliteration ; the play upon words which he often demonstrates, constitutes a popular feature in the later Sanskrit artificial prose works. When the poet uses the expression like—*sthityutpatti-nyayādihetur garuḍaketuḥ*, he evidently tries to exhibit his expertise in literary adornment. The prose-portion, though it lacks the wealth of descriptions, contains features of ornamental style. The constructions like—*piturguṇānukāriṇo varuṇaviṣṇoḥ* (line 5), *putreṇātyanta-*

bhagavadbhaktena (line 6) and *śatrusamara-jiṣṇunā mahārajā-mātṛviṣṇuṇā* (line 7)—bring forth real rhythmic effects. A notable specimen of pun is given in the sentence—*puṇya-janārddanasya janārddanasya dhvajastambho' bhyucchritaḥ* (line 9). Here, the word *puṇyajanārddana* means "troubler of the demons," *paṇyajana* denoting a class of demons.

This inscription does not show special liking for lengthy compound forms and is free, to some extent, from the Prākṛt influence and spelling disorder ; in most cases, it conforms to the Sandhi-rules. The author has not fully shown his perfection in utilising the *arthālaṁkara-s*, but indication of his ability in this regard is not totally absent.

CHAPTER III

Before we put a quietus to the study, an assessment of the subject, discussed in the preceding pages, will not, however, be inappropriate. The inscriptions, estimated above, may be taken as the representatives of the vast realm of inscriptional records produced during the Gupta era. They enable us to visualize the nature of cultural outburst as India witnessed it in the time of the Imperial Guptas. The socio-political system as well as religious atmosphere, set up by the Gupta rulers, during the 4th-5th centuries A.D., have been satisfactorily recorded in these inscriptions. From these epigraphical records, we may regard it as tolerably certain that the Imperial Guptas established their supremacy over a vast region comprising nearly the whole of Northern India. The Imperial command was obeyed from Bay of Bengal in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west. These inscriptions develop sufficient grounds to impress us that this era produced able military authorities, capable administrators, successful social reformers, and masters of sophisticated art and architecture. Evidences of an effective system of administration are borne up by these epigraphical documents and it is noteworthy that this system continued to be seriously followed in later centuries. These records further enlighten us about the fact that untrammelled peace and prosperity remained with the Guptas under whom India enjoyed the blessings of a powerful but benevolent Central Government. The inscriptions are the principal sources based on which the encomium, the Golden Age of India, has been rightly attached to this era. That this age

was renowned for a high spirit of catholicity and amity in regard to religion is also firmly established by these epigraphs. In fact, the history of the glorious epoch, under the Gupta monarchs, can only be consummated because of the fairly abundant inscriptional records.

To the development of Sanskrit literature, the inscriptions in general, and the Gupta inscriptions in particular, have made priceless contribution. If a comparative study of the inscriptions of the Gupta age is properly made, we will notice a gradual development in style and diction, but no spectacular progress in poetic imagination and rhetoric skill. While enormous Kāvya features are present in the *praśasti-s* of Hariṣeṇa and Vatsabhaṭṭi, a good number of inscriptions, written afterwards, are devoid of requisite literary merit. The Khoh copper-plate inscription (C 11. III, p. 96) of Mahārajā Hastin, dated 475 A. D., may be cited here as one of the various instances. This inscription proposes to record a grant, by Mahārāja Hastin of the village Vasuntaraṣaṇḍika, to one Gopasvāmin and some other Brāhmaṇas. It is an inscription of mediocre character, having no sincere attempt to exhibit poetic embelishments. It gives only two or three minor illustrations of ordinary figures of speech. Though preceded by a lot of inscriptions, rich in poetic merits, the present one exhibits numerous grammatical mistakes which are not definitely the engraver's errors.

There are, however, some important inscriptions, written in the first half of the 6th century A. D., which possess immense literary significance ; they deliberately attempt to achieve an ornate poetic character. Remarkable of these are the Gwaliar stone inscription of Mihirkula (C11. III., p. 162), dated 515-535 A. D., written in thirteen pleasing verses, and the Mandasor stone inscription of Yaśodharman (C 11. III., p. 152),

dated 532 A. D., composed in thirty-two laboured verses. The style and diction of these two inscriptions evince that they were produced by men possessing high poetic calibre. The later inscriptions made grotesque improvements in the realm of versification as well as prose composition.

If the entire Gupta inscriptions are taken into consideration, it becomes evident that a wide cultivation of poetry, both in prose and verse, was processed through the inscriptional writings. Inscriptions written in prose, verse and mixed language showed their versatile excellence during the period under review. In regard to versification, these inscriptions, in spite of several of their excellent ornamental verses, have not found a rightful place in the vast region of Sanskrit poetry ; in reality, Sanskrit metrical writing originated in a far-off period and attained sufficient progress and development already before the emergence of the Gupta power. The inscriptional verses, therefore, could not add fresh technicalities to the poetic world that had already accomplished maturity. The verses, in many cases, have been influenced by earlier or contemporaneous poetic creations. In the field of prose compositions, the inscriptions have no notable predecessor. As it has been pointed out earlier, the inscriptions, written in prose, were instrumental to bringing out later elevated prose compositions which achieved complete success in the works of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Subandhu and Dandin. The elaborate prose and metrical writings in these inscriptions establish that the writers of these *praśasti-s* conform to the rules of *alaṁkāra*, made into definite shape later on in the treatises of Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin and Viśvanātha.
